





IF THE GERMANS CONQUERED  
ENGLAND, AND OTHER ESSAYS

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IF THE GERMANS  
CONQUERED ENGLAND  
AND OTHER ESSAYS  
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TO  
ALICE STOPFORD GREEN  
THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS IRISHWOMAN OF HER TIME  
A LAMP OF LEARNING TO HER PEOPLE  
OF KINDNESS TO HER FRIENDS

## PREFATORY NOTE

Some people will remember that, at the outbreak of the insurrection in Dublin in Easter Week, 1916, the insurgents issued a little paper called *Irish War News*. The first page opened with an article entitled: "If the Germans Conquered England," which was based upon, and was more or less a quotation and endorsement of, the first essay in the present book. Thus the essay, if it has no other interest, is, at least, of interest in the use to which it was put on an historic occasion.

By a curious chance, on its appearance in *The New Statesman*, certain English Tories, as well as Irish Nationalists, discovered in it a reasonable statement of the principles of patriotism. One Tory professor read it out approvingly to a class of young officers, in order to bring home to them the things England is fighting for in the present war. This is not quite so astonishing as at first appears. The Irish national cause is the cause of every nation—England included—which is fighting against tyranny. Ireland does not demand any kind of liberty which she does not wish to see England, France, Belgium, Poland, and all the other nations enjoying in equal measure. She desires to be neither a slave-owner nor a slave among the nations. Ireland, in her struggle against English Imperialism, is the close counterpart of England and (closer still)

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Belgium in their struggle against German Imperialism. Germany, if she conquered England, could do no wrong that has not been done or is not even now being done by England in Ireland. The chief horror of conquest does not consist in atrocities: it consists in being conquered.

The Allies, in fighting against Germany, seem to me to be fighting against the principle and practice of conquest. There are, no doubt, forces of evil fighting on the side of the Allies as well as on the side of Germany. The *Morning Post* is red in tooth and claw in 1917 as it was in 1913, and the *Spectator* is still in its Irish attitude as expert as ever in making the worse appear the better cause in a way that appeals to clergymen. But even the *Morning Post* and the *Spectator*, whether they like it or not, are fighting for the same kind of liberty for which Irishmen are fighting. They cannot be hostile to the invaders of Serbia and the invaders of Belgium without acquiescing in principles of liberty which are applicable to every community of civilized men. When the Central Powers began the war with an attack on two small nations, they declared war on Nationalism all the world over. When the Allies took up the cause of those two small nations—whether from interested or disinterested motives makes no difference—they began what I believe will prove to be a war against Imperialism all the world over. The United States of the World in which all the empires will disappear, and all the nations, great and small, will live on terms of liberty, equality, and fraternity, is now, at least, within the scope of the prophet, if not of the practical politician.

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The peace of the world, indeed, is possible only as a result of some such reconciliation of the nationalist and internationalist ideals of the human race.

Practically all the essays in this book have appeared in the *New Statesman*, which must not, however, be regarded as necessarily acquiescing in the opinions I have expressed. The sketch of T. M. Kettle appeared in the *Daily News*, and that of Sheehy-Skeffington in the *Ploughshare*. The essay, "On Nationalism and Nationality" was written as a preface to a report of the Nationalities and Subject Races Conference as long ago as 1910.

ROBERT LYND

*June 1917*

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# IF THE GERMANS CONQUERED ENGLAND

When a small tradesman applies for exemption from military service on the ground that his business would be ruined by his absence, a question that is often put to him is: "What do you think will happen to your business if the Germans win the war?" As a rule the tradesman does not know what to think. He has no means of measuring world-catastrophes. He has not Dr. Johnson's short way with questions to which there is no answer. In the first place, the small tradesman does not believe in the possibility of a German victory. In the second place, he has not the slightest idea what would happen to his business as the result of one. Perhaps, however, he knows as much about the matter as the members of the tribunals. All of us know that a German victory which involved the conquest of England would make life intolerable for Englishmen until the conquest was undone. But as to its effect on small businesses, that is another matter. It is quite possible that the little grocery, the little tobacco-shop, and the confectioner's would be able to hold up their heads under German rule as under English. The valid argument against a German conquest is not that it would make an end of the small business man; it is that it would make an end of a free England. If it could be proved that a German conquest would add twenty-five per cent. to the incomes of all Englishmen, even that would not make it tolerable. Most men in all nations are ready to sacrifice their lives in order that their country may be free.

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They are also—though this is apparently much more difficult—ready to sacrifice their fortunes.

Consider for a moment the possibility that England might actually grow richer under German rule. It is very unlikely, because England is already a highly-developed country, but consider the one chance in a hundred million. We know that, so far as material wealth is concerned, Prussian Poland has gone forward, not backward, under Prussia. Mr. W. H. Dawson, author of *The Evolution of Modern Germany*, is a witness whose evidence on this point cannot be lightly dismissed. Referring to the work of the Settlement Board in Prussian Poland, he writes: “If the purpose had simply been the economic reawakening of the Polish East there would be much to praise and to admire in the results that have been achieved, for the settled districts have been entirely transformed and raised to a level of prosperity never known before.” There are men with a passion for efficiency to whom such a record of material progress appeals as a justification of any kind of tyranny. We had an example of this spirit some time ago in the boasts of some German newspapers that under German rule the industries of Belgium were already reviving, and that Belgian prosperity would soon be on a sounder basis than ever. One may be sure that in the conquered territories, even in these days of martial law and high prices, thousands of little businesses in Belgium are astonishingly alive. Lawyers still practise in the law-courts, doctors attend the sick, priests go on preaching, shops are open, factories are working, fields are cultivated. This, of course, is not universally true; and, while the country remains a battlefield, it can only be true of certain parts of it. But it is clear enough that, whatever other evils would follow the permanent conquest of Belgium, the refusal to allow the average Belgian to make a living

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would not necessarily be one of them. It is not for the right to make a living, it is for the right to live their own national life, that the Belgians are fighting. Like Wordsworth's Englishmen, they "must be free or die." That is not mere uneconomic rhetoric. Freedom is a form of wealth which brave nations prize above gold and silver. Professor Kettle horrified some of the followers of Sir Edward Carson during the Home Rule controversy when he declared that he put freedom before finance. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, I admit, freedom and sound finance, so far from being antitheses, are complementary to each other. But, even though they were not, Professor Kettle's attitude would be the right one. The man who would prefer finance to freedom ought also, in order to be consistent, to prefer finance to honour and justice, and all those other noble abstractions, belief in which differentiates good Europeans from wild animals.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Germany triumphed so overwhelmingly—an extremely unlikely supposition, I agree—that she was able to incorporate England in the German Empire, and suppose that she was resolved to purchase the acquiescence of Englishmen in German rule by developing English industries and English arts as they had never been developed before, would the spirit of England yield to the bribe? One can imagine how Germany, with the hope of this in her mind, would set out with all her efficiency to reorganize the railways and the canals, and so give an unwonted elasticity to the industrial life of the country. One can imagine how she would set about the work of town-planning and street-sweeping. One can imagine how she would build technical schools, art schools, and musical academies and opera houses. One can imagine how she would build the long-lost Shakespeare Memorial

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Theatre. But even though the English farmer found himself with a freer access to markets and the English manufacturer found himself with a kingdom of chemists and inventors at his disposal, the country would still have something to complain about. In the first place, it would be constantly irritated by the lofty moral utterances of German statesmen who would assert—quite sincerely, no doubt—that England was free, freer indeed than she had ever been before. Prussian freedom, they would explain, was the only real freedom, and therefore, England was free. They would point to the flourishing railways and farms and colleges. They would possibly point to the contingent of M.P.'s which was permitted, in spite of its deplorable disorderliness, to sit in a permanent minority in the Reichstag. And not only would the Englishman have to listen to a constant flow of speeches of this sort; he would find a respectable official Press secretly bought by the Government to say the same kind of things over and over every day of the week. He would find, too, that his children were coming home from school with new ideas of history. They would be better drilled, more obedient than he himself used to be in his schooldays, but he would get angry when he heard what was taught to them as history. They would ask him if it was really true that until the Germans came England had been an unruly country constantly engaged in civil war, as in the days of the Wars of the Roses, Cromwell, William III., the Young Pretender, and Sir Edward Carson—a country one of whose historians actually glorified a king who had beheaded his wives, and one of whose kings was afterwards beheaded; a country which sold its own subjects into slavery; a country which was given its Empire by Frederick the Great, and which then deserted him; a country which gave

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birth to Shakespeare, but could not appreciate him; a country which had won its way in the world by good luck and treachery, not by honesty and intelligence. One can guess how the blackening process would go on. It would be done for the most part by reasonable-looking insinuation. The object of every schoolbook would be to make the English child grow up with the feeling that the history of his country was a thing to forget, and that the one bright spot in it was that it had been conquered by cultured Germany.

And in every University the same kind of thing would be going on. Behind round spectacles generation after generation of Prussian professors would lecture on the history of the German Empire (including, as one of its less important aspects, the history of England). They would teach young Englishmen that Luther, and Frederick, and Stein, and Goethe, and List, and Bismarck were the founders of civilisation. They would possibly add the suggestion of Houston Chamberlain that Christ and St. Paul and Dante were part of the German tradition. They would begin to spell Shakespeare with an "Sch." They would probably explain that Shakespeare in German was superior to Shakespeare in English. Like Houston Chamberlain, they would believe in "the holy German language" as they believe in God. They would say it was a better language than English because it was inflected. They would set on foot a movement to substitute it for English in the schools and colleges, in order to prevent English children from growing up insular and cut off from the world-civilisation. Gradually it would become an offence to use English as the language of instruction. In another generation it would become an offence to use it at all. If there was a revolt—and, by the dog, as Socrates used to say, there

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would be!—German statesmen would deliver grave speeches about “disloyalty,” “ingratitude,” “reckless agitators who would ruin their country’s prosperity.” Prussian officials would walk up and down every town and every village in the country, the embodiment of this grave concern for the welfare of England. Prussian soldiers would be encamped in every barracks—the English conscripts having been sent out of the country either to be trained in Germany or to fight the Chinese—in order to come to the aid of German rectitude, should English sedition come to blows with it.

Thus, if England could only be got to submit, would she be gradually warped. She would be exhorted to abandon her own genius in order to imitate the genius of her conquerors, to forget her own history for a larger history, to give up her own language for a “universal” language—in other words, to destroy her household gods one by one, and to put in their place alien gods. Such an England would be an England without a soul, without even a mind. She would be a nation of slaves, even though every slave in the country had a chicken in his pot and a golden dish to serve it on. No amount of prosperity could make up for the degradation of living perpetually under the heel of the Prussian policeman and under the eye of the Prussian professor. Even the man who kept a small sweet-shop would feel queer stirrings of rage within him, however prosperous he was, however clean the streets were swept, as he saw his policeman-conqueror tramping majestically past his door. He would feel as if he were in the grip of some monstrous machine. He would tell himself that law and order was a good thing but not at this price. To live among all those pompous foreign officials would be worse than being in prison. There would be a fire in his head

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till he met another man with a fire in his head, and together they would form a secret society and look forward to the great day of rebellion.

It is against this spiritual conquest of England rather than against the threat of bankrupt businesses that Englishmen will fight with the fiercest inspiration. The real case against Germany is not so much that a German conquest would make England bankrupt, as that it would make England no longer England. Englishmen would shrink from German rule at its best no less than from German rule at its most atrocious. They would spurn Germany as a conqueror bringing gifts equally with Germany as a conqueror bringing poverty and destruction. Wordsworth, in a similar mood, has expressed the feelings of a "high-minded Spaniard" when in 1810 Napoleon held out to Spain the hope of peace and prosperity under his sway:

"We can endure that he should waste our lands,  
Despoil our temples, and by sword and flame  
Return us to the dust from which we came;  
Such food a tyrant's appetite demands:  
And we can brook the thought that by his hands  
Spain may be overpowered, and he possess  
For his delight a solemn wilderness  
Where all the brave lie dead. But when of bands  
Which he will break for us he dares to speak,  
Of benefits and of a future day,  
When our enlightened minds shall bless his sway;  
*Then*, the strained heart of fortitude proves weak;  
Our groans, our blushes, our pale cheeks declare,  
That he has power to inflict what we lack strength  
to bear."

That is not one of Wordsworth's greatest sonnets, but it expresses well enough the passion which

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Belgium must feel at the present moment, when the Germans are trying to get them to look forward to an era of benefactions under German rule. It expresses, too, the passion which Englishmen would feel in the same circumstances. No man with the slightest glimmer of patriotism would consent to see his country made a nation of millionaires at the price of being a nation of slaves.

## THE DARKNESS

It was common enough during the first year of the war to meet people who took an æsthetic pleasure in the darkness of the streets at night. It gave them *un nouveau frisson*. They said that never had London been so beautiful. It was hardly a gracious thing to say about London. And it was not entirely true. The hill of Piccadilly has always been beautiful, with its lamps suspended above it like strange fruits. The Thames between Westminster Bridge and Blackfriars has always been beautiful at night, pouring its brown waters along in a dusk of light and shadow. And have we not always had Hyde Park like a little dark forest full of lamps, with the gold of the lamps shaken into long Chinese alphabets in the windy waters of the Serpentine? There was Chelsea, too. Surely, even before the war, Chelsea by night lay in darkness like a town forgotten and derelict in the snug gloom of an earlier century. And, if Chelsea was pitchy, St. George's-in-the-East and London of the docks were pitchier. There we seemed already to be living underground. The very lamps, yellow as a hag's skin with snuff in every wrinkle, seemed scarcely to give enough light to enable one to see the world of rags and blackness which one was visiting like a stranger from another planet. One finds it so difficult to conjure up the appearance of London in the time before the war that one may be exaggerating. But, so far as one can remember, night in London was even then something of an enchantress and London the land of an enchantress. Her palace-lights, her dungeon darkness, her snoring suburbs tucked away

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into bed after a surfeit of the piano and the gramophone—here, even in days of peace, was an infinite variety of spectacle. Not that I will pretend that the suburbs were ever beautiful. They are more depressing than a heap of old tins, than a field of bricks, than slob-lands, than vineyards in early summer. They are more commonplace than the misuse of the word “phenomenal” or the jargon of house-agents. They do not possess enough character even to be called ugly. They are the expression in brick of the sin of the Laodiceans. Neither the light of peace nor the Tartarus of war can awaken them out of their bad prose. One thinks of them as the commodious slave-quarters of modern civilization. The human race has yet to learn, or to re-learn, how to build suburbs. It is a proof of our immorality that we cannot do so. Well, the darkness has at least hidden the face of the suburbs. It has changed long rows of houses into little cottages, and monotonous avenues into country lanes down which cautious figures make their way with torches. Sometimes in these circumstances, the dullest street becomes like a parade of will-o’-the-wisps. The post-girl alone, with her larger lamp, is impressive as a motorcar or a policeman. She steps with the self-assurance of an institution past the images of lost souls looking for Paradise by candlelight. . . .

Certainly, the first searchlight that waved above London like a sword was wonderful. That made the darkness—and Charing Cross—beautiful. The lovers of darkness were right when they praised searchlights. Probably the first of them was but a tiny affair compared to those that now lie thick as post-offices between the hills of north and south London; but it impressed the imagination as an adventurer among the stars. One would not have been unduly surprised if one had caught sight of the prince of the powers of the air making his way

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on black wings from star to star at the end of its long beam. Later on, London sent forth a hundred such lights. She spent her evenings like a mathematician drawing weird geometrical figures on the darkness. She became the greatest of the Futurists, all cubes and angles. Sometimes she seemed like a crab lying on its back and waving a multitude of inevitable pincers. Sometimes she seemed to be fishing in the sky with an immense drag-net of light. Sometimes, on misty-moisty nights, the searchlights lit up the sluggish clouds with smudges of gold. It was like a decoration of water-lilies on long stems of light. On nights on which a Zeppelin raid was in progress one has seen the distant sky filled, as it were, with lilies, east and west, north and south. And, for many people, the Zeppelins themselves seemed to have beautified the night. For my part, I confess I cannot regard the Zeppelin without prejudice as a spectacle. That it is beautiful as a silver fish, as the lights play on it, I will not deny. Nor can one remain unmoved by the sight as shells burst about it with little sputters, like fireworks on a wet night. But, even as a pyrotechnic display, the Zeppelin raid has, in my opinion, been overestimated. They could do better at the Crystal Palace. As soon as the first novelty of the Zeppelins had worn off, it was their beastliness rather than their beauty that impressed itself upon those with the most persistent passion for sight-seeing. Even the sight of a Zeppelin in flames, awe-inspiring though it was, soon ceased to be a novelty calling for superlatives. All the same, London of the searchlights and the Zeppelins will not be forgotten in sixty years. Men and women now living will relate to their grandchildren how they saw a ship in the sky in a tangle of gold lights, and how the ship was then swallowed up in darkness, and how, after a space of darkness and echoes, the

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sky suddenly purpled into a false dawn and opened into a rose of light.<sup>t</sup> Then, hung in the air for a moment, was a little ball of flame, and then the darkness again, and only a broken rope of gold hurriedly dropped down the sky to announce the ultimate horror of disaster. Those who had a nearer view of the affair will have their own variant of the story. They, too, will tell how the sky was suddenly flooded with monstrous tides of light at midnight, and how the wonders of morning and sunset were mingled, and how the sunset began to move towards them with its red eye, with its red mouth, a vast furnace-ship, an enemy of the world, increasing, lengthening, a doom impending, till once more darkness and foolish cheers, and laughter and anecdotes in the streets. Assuredly, the darkness of London has had its interesting moments. . . .

One has to admit the attractions even of the common darkness of the streets. Perhaps it has become, from an æsthetic point of view, excessive in recent months, and, except on moonlight nights, we have too much the air of shadowy creatures of the Brocken as we make our way about in the dimness. The tram that used to sail along like a ship with all its lights burning was certainly a prettier thing to see than the dismal 'bus of these days, packed like a doss-house, charging into obscurity. A long line of taxicabs can still give a street in a busy hour the appearance of a stream of stars, and on a wet evening even a procession of vans with their red lights reflected in the pavement can impart to the commonest road the magic of a Venetian canal. But the darkness is by no means so beautiful now as it was when a few windows were still left lighted. At the time of the first lighting regulations, we were given a subdued light instead of a glare. Buildings with every feature a misunderstanding revealed themselves as impressive masses; illuminated adver-

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tisements disappeared; and we could still see to read the evening paper in a 'bus, so that we were rather gratified, or at least disinclined to grumble. Now, however, we have reached the stage of real darkness. To go out in it is, as I heard a servant remark, like going into the coal-hole without a candle. There are parts of the town in which even the soberest man may walk into a tree or a lamp-post, and there is almost no part of the town in which during the dark of the moon a man may not fall down a flight of stone steps—and will not, if he does not carry an electric torch. Perhaps the best compensation Londoners have been given for the darkness is the pleasing variety of the means by which the lights have been dimmed in different neighbourhoods. In some suburbs the lamps look as though they had been dirtied like a slut's face. Elsewhere they wear masks pierced with holes, and are terrible and black like inquisitors or mediæval executioners. Some of them are blue, some green, some brown, some flamingo-coloured. London, that lawless city, was never more admirably lawless than in this. Light falls from many of them like the veils that little children wear in Catholic countries on taking their first communion. From others it falls like the garment of a ghost. Other lights give the effect of a row of Chinese lanterns hung high above a high street. But there is no sense of merriment amid all these fantastic odds and ends of lights. The light regulations have manifestly muted the life of London. Even the Australian and Canadian soldiers who pace so determinedly up and down the Strand and hang in groups round every corner, have an elfin unsubstantial appearance among the shadows. Men not in khaki look black as Hamlets. Girls of the plainest are mysteries till one hears their voices. The porches of theatres are filled with a blue mystic light that would make one speak in whispers. Night

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certainly falls on London like a blanket. Perhaps it is mostly illusion. There is, as they say, all the fun of the fair going on for those who are young and giddy of heart, and London is not without laughter and loud voices and reeling figures. But the effect is, undoubtedly, depressing. Public-houses, darkened like prisons, no longer invite the mob with bright and vulgar windows. Cinematograph theatres are as gloomy-fronted as though over their doors they bore the motto : "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." Rather than venture into such a wilderness of joylessness, many people prefer to sit at home and play tiddleywinks. Or argue. How they argue!

Luckily, in the beginning, there were created, along with the earth, a sun and a moon, and neither policeman nor magistrate nor any other creature has any power over them of regulation or control. It is the moon that makes London by night beautiful in war-time. It is the moon that makes the north side of Trafalgar Square white with romance like a Moorish city, and makes the South Kensington Museum itself appear as though it had been built to music. London under the moon is a city of wonder, a city of fair streets and fair citizens. Under the moon the arc-lamps in their cowls no longer affect us like sentinel killjoys. They seem feeble and insignificant as dying torches when the moon-light performs her miracles and exalts this city of mean dwellings into a beauty equal to that of the restless sea.

## REVENGE

ously, "send 'im to St. 'Elena. • W'y should 'e live in luxury in St. 'Elena? And I'm not sure if I *would* shoot 'im. Shooteen's too honourable for 'im." He tapped me on the knee confidentially. "I'd send 'im to Sigh-beria," he rasped, with the air of committing a dreadful secret to me, "there to live in tawtcher!" It may be retorted that the people who talk like this do not mean what they say—that, if they did suddenly find themselves invested with power of life and death over the Kaiser, they would probably treat him as humanely as was consistent with depriving him of opportunities to escape or to repeat his crimes. Napoleon was regarded until he was captured as a fiend almost too horrible to be allowed to exist. Once he was captured, he fascinated even the English sailors who carried him away. We like to take our revenges these days in words, not in deeds. We have lost most of the delight our savage forefathers used to experience in the physical sufferings of their enemies. We have not yet, however, ceased entirely to delight in the thought of these sufferings.

Revenge is certainly one of the oldest and most natural of the passions. It is as old as the day on which Moses slew the Egyptian. It goes back to the year in which Achilles dragged the body of Hector round the walls of Troy. It is still a powerful force in the lives of many subject nationalities. The Finn and the Pole can appreciate the motives of Moses to-day—at least they could yesterday. Revenges, such as the assassination of Bobrikoff, are regarded as executions rather than murders. There are cases of revenge, indeed, with which nearly all of us would be half in sympathy even if we felt bound to disapprove of them. The man who avenges an injury done to his wife or his children is seldom regarded as a criminal on the same level as the man who avenges an injury merely to himself. Most of us

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would admit that there are two kinds of revenge—the selfish and the unselfish—and that in unselfish revenge there is a quality of nobleness. One of the greatest heroes of every generous schoolboy's imagination is Hannibal, sworn from his childhood to vengeance upon Rome. We are still capable of this national vengefulness, though the moralists do not encourage it. The Irish, we may be sure, charged all the more resolutely at Fontenoy, owing to their watchword, "Remember Limerick!" The desire to settle national accounts of this kind is deep-seated and a powerful motive in war. One would expect that, in the present war, the French would fight with greater determination than any of their allies, owing to their long-expressed desire to avenge the humiliations of 1870. If they do not do so, it is because organisation is even more effective than the spirit of revenge. Certainly, one has no desire to see vengeance proved efficient. It never does settle accounts in a final manner. We see in every record of feud or vendetta a foolish give-and-take of crime, to which there is no logical end but the extermination of one side. A Capulet kills a Montague, who has to be avenged. A Capulet is killed, and again vengeance must be taken. Kill another Montague, and another Capulet must perish. However one's sympathies may lie at the beginning of the feud, before long the imagination sickens at this monotonous serial of murder. Sooner or later the heart turns to magnanimity for relief. It might equally well have begun with it. Both in private and public life we find that vengeance sets us sliding down an inclined plane of folly.

One has an excellent example of this in the relations between Protestants and Catholics during, at least, two centuries. Mary burned Protestants in England; Elizabeth massacred Catholics in Ireland. France maltreated Protestants; Eng-

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land in retort outlawed Catholics. Each could—or at least did—always point to some previous crime committed by the other to justify its own crime. One found the same criminal tit-for-tat in Ulster only yesterday, when an attack on a Protestant Sunday-school excursion at Castledawson was answered by outrages upon Catholics in the Belfast shipyards. The history of the present war has been full of the small change of revenge. Germans were nearly kicked to death by the mob in the streets of Brussels. Englishmen had perilous experiences at the hands of the mob in Berlin. Outrages of this kind, in all probability, have not been so general as the Press has made out. I am sure that, if stories of humanity made as sensational “copy” as stories of brutality, the papers would have been as full of the former as of the latter. The Press, however, thrives on the spirit of vengeance. The German Press is eager to rouse the spirit of vengeance in the German people. The English Press—or a part of it—is eager to rouse the spirit of vengeance in the English people. Consequently, each country hears a good deal more than the worst of the other, and a good deal less than the best. I do not mean to suggest that the armies of the Allies have committed crimes such as the burning of Louvain or that the guilt of the Germans is not colossal. But one prefers to see the peoples spurred on to fight chivalrously rather than in the spirit of wild revenge. One would not like to see the armies of the Allies devoured with a passion for answering outrage with outrage, horror with horror. One has no love for this book-keeping in murder.

Outrages should incite us to overthrow the outrager. That is all. The women he has defiled cannot be restored to happiness by the unhappiness of yet other women. A dead German child will

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not bring a dead Belgian child to life again. Louvain will not rise from its ashes even though you burn down Heidelberg to the last book in its libraries. One can see at once what a world of futilities one would be led into by revenge. The truth is that in this world it is almost always impossible to make the punishment fit the crime without becoming a criminal oneself—and a futile one at that. Among primitive races men resort to torture in order to inflict adequate punishment on the guilty. Civilised peoples have again and again reverted to this method of barbarism; indeed, they clung to it with bitter faith till within the last century. It would be difficult to show that it ever lessened crime. It has been ineffective as a weapon of virtue and has in a hundred cases been turned against the most virtuous citizens in the State. Nobody now approves—in theory, at least—of vindictiveness in punishment. We believe almost as little in cruelty to criminals as in cruelty to children. We would not break a man on the wheel or torture him on the rack or burn him over a slow fire, no matter how abominable his crime. It is not that he might not deserve it. It is simply that we feel we should become base ourselves in answering his crime in that way. This, I admit, is armchair philosophy. If one were a Belgian—if one had seen one's home devastated, one's women violated, one's dwellings razed to the ground—one would no doubt see red in one's hatred of so remorseless an enemy. One might even—though, I confess, I do not see how any but the unimaginative or the distraught could—feel such a rage as the Psalmist felt when he desired God to dash the heads of the little children of his enemies against the stones. On the other hand, when one thinks the matter out calmly, one can see no clear and honest way of revenge but to heap coals of fire

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on an enemy's head. When one hears that the crew of a German mine-layer has been rescued from death by British sailors, one knows that the British sailors have done the right thing. That is the only kind of revenge which does not darken the light of the sun—the revenge of magnanimity.

## THE ASS

Many authors have written in defence of the goat, the goose, and the ass. They have contended, and not without a good show of argument, that the goat, the goose, and the ass are maligned and beautiful animals. Mr. W. H. Hudson has written an apologia for the goose which is one of the most attractive of contemporary essays. So far as I can remember, one of his brightest examples of intelligence in the goose family was a gander which tried to open a gate by pushing it with the flat of its foot. Probably, if one were sufficiently intimate with the higher life of the goat, one would be able to quote a parallel miracle of good sense. But, in spite of all the artists and naturalists have done on behalf of the reputation of these three animals, the world at large, following the tradition, has insisted upon regarding them as patterns of brainlessness, stubbornness, and noise.

Of the three, the ass has suffered most from abuse. At the same time it has also been the most glorified. It appears and reappears in paintings of the life of Christ like a household pet. One sees it pacing the little winding roads among the little hills in a hundred pictures of the Holy Family. The very cross upon its back is said to have been bestowed upon it as a memento of the day on which it bore Christ over the palms into Jerusalem. The Christian Church in some parts of Europe at one period held a festival in its honour on the 14th of January in commemoration of the Flight into Egypt. During the feast, as it was observed at Beauvais—so we are told in all the books on the medieval drama—an ass, ridden by a beautiful girl carrying a baby or doll,

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was led into the church to hear Mass, and, as the service went on, the people honoured it by chanting "Hee-haw" wherever the responses should have been given. The ass, which at times seems to have been a wooden figure, was greeted, we are told, with an address, a part of which has been translated, "From the Eastern lands the Ass is come, beautiful and very brave, well fitted to bear burdens. Up, Sir Ass, and sing! Open your pretty mouth. Hay will be yours in plenty and oats in abundance." At the end of the service the priest brayed instead of saying *Ite, missa est*, and the congregation responded with a triple "Hee-haw! Hee-haw! Hee-haw!" This may in its origin have been a festival in praise of an ass's good deeds. But it was clearly transformed in time into a festival of the comic sense at which men purged themselves of the arrears of blasphemy and irreverence that were stored up in their bosoms. The ass became a means of insult, not an object of worship; and since the Middle Ages it has been the men of letters rather than the priests who have regarded it with something like affectionate esteem. It is possible that the veneration of the ass may in some way be descended from some pre-Christian form of ass-worship. The Egyptians worshipped Seth in the similitude of an ass, and one of the scandalous charges against the Jews was that they were ass-worshippers, or, in the more learned word, onolaters. They were believed even to fatten some profane person, such as a Greek, every five years, to sacrifice to their ass-deity. The scandal was afterwards transferred to the Christians, and Tertullian has left a story of an apostate Jew who carried an ass-eared figure through the streets of Carthage, with an inscription saying that this was the god of the Christians. A third-century caricature of the Crucifixion, in which the figure on the cross has an ass's head, is suggestive of the popularity of the ass

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legend, and some authorities have even seen a mockery of the Christian religion in the fantastic humour of the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius. It will be seen that the ass has had a harlequin career. He has been a god, and he has supplied a head to Bottom the weaver. Mr. Wells, in one of the most brilliant satires of *Boon*, has further proclaimed the beast's presence in the House of Commons and in the offices of British newspapers, and has stated one of the great problems of the hour as the problem of driving the wild asses of the Devil back into Hell.

There is certainly no greater peril to the world than the ass. There is also no greater peril to the ass than the ass. It was the asininity of the Stuarts which lost them the English throne. It was the stubborn asininity of George III. which lost England the American colonies. It was to the asininity of Marie Antoinette that was partly due the ungovernable rage of the French Revolution. History is an epic of the destruction of asses or of the destruction which asses have brought upon innocent people. The ass has cut this prominent figure in history because its stubbornness is more lasting than character and more persistent than wisdom. The wise man will get tired of being wise before the ass gets tired of being an ass. That is the ass's strength. Its bray echoes down the centuries like the voice of a conqueror. It has invaded not only the sanctuary, but politics, literature and the arts. For the most part, each generation forgets the asses of the generation before. Even when a Pope writes a *Dunciad* we find it difficult to read. We become overwhelmed in the presence of such a multitude of asses. We feel we have enough of our own. And yet, unless we realise what the human ass has accomplished in past ages, we shall be in danger of underestimating the peril he is to our own time. Had it not been for the ass, it is

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possible that we should have arrived at the New Jerusalem, or by whatever name you prefer to call the golden city, long ago. But the ass has always insisted upon knowing better than anyone else, and, on the plea that it objected to its present driver, has lain down at the side of the muddy road. It always seems to be suggesting that, if it only had another driver, it would proceed on its journey at a gallop. But give it another driver, and it still protests. Of all animals it is said to have almost the least social sense. It is infinitely less responsive than a cat. If only the asses could unite together they would make the world an impossible place to live in. But they do not even understand that group-consciousness which, in one of its forms, we call patriotism. They indulge in a "Hee-haw" patriotism of their own, it is true, but it seldom gets beyond a "Hee-haw." It is merely a bray and obstructiveness. Soon the face resumes its placid insensibility. The ass is as unteachable as he is serious-looking. He always looks serious, even at times at which one suspects him of something like frivolity. There was an asinine seriousness about the proceedings of a local body the other day which ordered the deletion of a German manufacturer's name from the face of the municipal clock. Obviously, the adult males who passed a resolution to this effect had utterly failed to realise that we are in the midst of the most serious crisis that has come upon the world for more than a century. No one with what is called horse-sense could have ever dreamed that the cause of freedom in Europe could be aided by scratching a few letters off the face of a clock. But it is exactly the sort of idea which appeals to the ass-sense of human beings. A few days later appeared a letter from a gentleman urging his fellow-countrymen to imitate the example of this body in regard to the names of London streets

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and squares. He said that it was a national disgrace that London should possess a Teutonically-named Hanover Square. Luckily, diversions of this kind from the serious business of the war have very little effect. But they are sufficiently numerous to suggest that the ass is a far from extinct animal in England.

And there are much more serious cases than this. There are a number of gentlemen with seats in the Houses of Parliament whose minds are continually busy with the same kind of serious frivolities and obstinate inanities. The finest materials for the natural history of the ass exist not in Buffon, but in Hansard. One authority upon asses has written that "it would be interesting to find out what were the different conditions that made one variety of wild ass a shy animal and another variety of ass an inquisitive animal." As to the conditions I do not propose to discuss them. But as to the existence of the inquisitive "variety of ass" do not every day's Parliamentary reports bear painful witness to it? First, there is the kind that asks whether the Home Office is aware that a little girl whose grandmother, though born in Italy, had a German step-aunt, is employed on a sewing-machine in the neighbourhood of a munitions factory in Bubbletown, and whether he will undertake to have her interned without further delay. Then there is the sort that asks whether it is the case that Lord Haldane was seen eating sausages during a recent visit to Switzerland, whether this is not evidence of pro-German sympathies, whether the Government commissioned him to eat the sausages, and whether the sausages were paid for at the nation's expense or out of Lord Haldane's own pocket. Yet a third variety is inquisitive about neutrals. It does not exactly know what a neutral is. It regards "neutral" as a word which means somebody who ought to be hostile to

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Germany, but isn't. It thinks that the word ought to mean one who is at the beck and call of the Allies. This kind of "inquisitive animal" would in all probability denounce America for having abandoned her neutrality if she were able and willing to supply munitions to Germany as she has done to England. He "hee-haws" about small nations when Belgium is mentioned, but when he is roused against Holland or Greece he declares his readiness to make war on them as "petty States." It is impossible for him to get it into his head that, though the passage of contraband goods into Germany may be a serious matter, it would be still more serious to add a new ally to the armies of the Central Powers. He is ready to challenge all the nations of the earth. He regards the Foreign Office apparently as an institution which exists for the purpose of smuggling meat and munitions into Germany. He will trust no Foreign Office which does not put neutrals under lock and key. He contributes nothing but noise and obstinacy to a situation which demands, above all things, brains. One scarcely knows whether he is more stupid or mischievous. Mrs. Wharton in her book on *Fighting France* observes that, in her opinion, the fine and determined spirit in which the French are waging the war is due above all to their national intelligence. There is abundance of intelligence in England, too, but there is a constant danger of its being of no avail owing to the obstinate and opinionated quadrupeds that are continually setting themselves across its path. On the side of asinity the gods themselves fight in vain, and, though it was geese that saved the Roman Capitol, one may be quite sure that it is not asses that are going to save the imperilled freedom of Europe.

## FAREWELL TO TREATING

It would be interesting to make a register of the adult males of England in terms of those who never go into a public-house from one year's end to the other, those who sometimes do so, and those who regularly do so. The last two classes, I imagine, would greatly outnumber the first. England is a public-house-going nation. She drank beer under the sign of the Seven Stars and rested the soles of her feet in the sawdust at the bar of the Salutation and Cat long before Columbus lost himself at sea or Isaac Newton began to take note of falling apples. Is not the very word "public-house" an epitome of the history of a nation's pleasure? The bishops have never succeeded in making the churches public-houses in the degree in which the inns are public-houses. There have been periods in history when men have been compelled by law to go to church, but no law was ever needed to drive a man into an inn. He has found here as nowhere else the medicine of fancy, the elixir *vitæ*. He has found here a true house of peers, in which Oliver Cromwell's ideal that every Jack shall be a gentleman is realised as it has not yet been realised in politics. The public-houses in cities are not, I admit, so democratic as that. Their public bars and private bars and saloon bars and jug-and-bottle entrances wall off the classes from each other like animals in cages, and in some of them even a row of little shutters, at the height of a man's face, conceals the respectable tradesman from his carter who may be roaring in the four-ale bar. None the less, the public-house is, on the whole, a place of relaxation and friendliness.

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Men who have left their homes with sour faces here find no difficulty in beaming upon perfect strangers. The same man who has just argued himself too poor to afford to buy his child a pair of shoes that will keep out the rain, here swells into a balloon of generosity and becomes a prince of the golden age while the money lasts. Such an atmosphere of generosity, indeed, dwells in the public-house like a guardian spirit that the law has had on more than one occasion to step in and forbid men to be excessively friends with one another. Thus it was made illegal for wages to be paid in public houses, for fear that men in a wild intoxication of brotherhood might pour out their gold like a gift. And now comes the no-treating order as another fetter upon this easy traditional charity. It is no longer possible to pay for another man's drink in a London public-house, whether he be your friend or whether he be one of those homeless nightbirds with the sadness of defeat in their hollow eyes, for whom all is lost save beer.

Many writers have, during the last few months, been denouncing the treating system as the root of much evil, and I have no doubt that it has often resulted in men drinking far more than they either wished or had a head for. Treating was not always so voluntary, such a matter of goodwill, as it appeared. Sometimes one was practically compelled to treat; at other times one was practically compelled to be treated. The second of the alternatives was, perhaps, the more painful. There were youths of a certain class and at a certain stage of riotousness who took it as a personal insult if an acquaintance did not drink with them, and having won their point in regard to this, also took it as a personal insult if the drink ordered were not of a sufficiently strong variety. Ginger ale and lemonade

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they hated as the Devil is said to hate holy water. Sometimes they flatly refused to pay for "soft drinks" of this kind. They glowered upon the drinker of shandygaff as a Laodicean. They justly abominated the man, being above seventeen years of age, who called for public-house claret. To be treated by men of this kind was something of a servitude. At times the victim of the tyrannies of treating could be seen stealthily pouring an undesired glass of whiskey into a flower-pot, into a fire-place, on the floor, anywhere except down his throat. But this has always been regarded as an outrage upon hospitality, and the perpetrator of such a deed has earned the black opinions of good and bad men alike.

It would be absurd, however, to pretend that the treating system put all of us to such discomforts and shifts. Many men protested against a second third, fourth or fourteenth drink, but their protests were half-hearted, or they would have got up and gone home. The protester was usually a kingdom divided against itself. Reason sternly said one thing, and a smiling stomach—or was it a smiling heart?—said another. It was only a rationalist of the strictest sect, who, having attained to a certain hazy and golden view of the world, could without a pang, rise up and go out into the streets of disillusion. It was a kind of anticipation of death. For convinced and professional drinkers the end of the world came every night with the monotonous cry of the pot-boy, "Time, gentlemen, please!" and the final clanging of the doors. From the company of rosy-faced friends they went out among skeletons and shadows. Their wills still hovered among the fumes and tobacco smoke of those haunts of friendship after their departure, as the souls in Plato are still bound after death to their earthly desires. They had had playmates, they had had

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companions, and now they were as chill and solitary as a ghost under the moon. These, it may be urged, are not the typical good fellows of the public-houses, but diseased specimens, creatures of one idea. This may be, but they are in the tradition of social drinking in a degree their sober contemporaries are not. They are heirs of the Mermaid Tavern, of the days of Steele and Addison, of the days of Pitt and Fox and Sheridan, of the days of Lamb and Coleridge. They are the brothers of Falstaff, now sunk upon tradesman days and grown leaner at the waist. They are proportionately fewer now than they have been for centuries, but even to-day they are more numerous than the Knights of the Round Table. Or were so yesterday. And now the war has killed them.

At least it has struck at their self-respect a blow from which it will not easily recover. Hitherto they were able to gather round the bar as models of altruism. Theirs was a freemasonry of fellowship. The give-and-take of drink warmed them like virtue in action. Each man, as it were, drank not only his private whiskey or beer, but a communal nectar. Now that the law has forbidden treating, however, if a man is to go on drinking with his friends, he will have an uneasy feeling that he is drinking alone—that he is, in the slang term of reproach, a “dumb boozer.” He will be paying for himself all the time instead of for others. He will be the sort of person he has always wanted to kick, since he was a tiny boy and hated his school-fellow for eating sweets by himself and never offering to share them. If he grows redder as to the nose and blotchier as to the face, he will no longer be able to tell himself, forgivingly, “That is the price of being a good fellow.” These things will henceforth seem the emblems of self-indulgence, and worthier of a place in a teetotaler’s tract than in a good man’s counte-

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nance. To tell the truth, the no-treating order has taken the virtue out of drinking. After all, men did drink out of charitableness as well as from thirst, and it was not entirely to their discredit. That is why I would say a very gentle farewell to all those walking bonfires of bibulousness which are now being quenched, I admit, but nevertheless, may they smoulder in peace!

Hapless, too, is the case of the sponger, the cheerful Jack Point of the public-houses, he who could entertain all day with his conversation the meanest and the stupidest of mankind, provided only his tankard was kept full. He was often the brightest figure in the public-house—sometimes the best-dressed. He was fond of boasting of his relationship with some great personage—a statesman, a peer, or a man of letters. His eye never wearied of gleaming as, making use of the ancient jest, he deduced his downfall from “slow horses and fast women.” Sometimes he was a broken-down actor, sometimes he was a broken-down doctor. In either case he was always ready to accept drink, and, a moment later, tobacco, and then he would hold his host by the elbow in a little whispered conference, during which the question of a small loan—anything up to a million and down to twopence—would be discussed. What will happen to that lean champion of the breed who used to come through the doors like Hamlet, uttering “Oho!” in every kind of voice, from the sepulchral to the triumphant? Perhaps he has been dead for years. If he is not, how fallen on evil days! How very sepulchral his “Oho!” must have grown by this time! How starved his mirth! No more, at mention of a drink, will he look with dreaming eyes into the face of his benefactor, and say: “‘Kind hearts are more than coronets and simple faith than Norman blood.’”

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Tennyson, my boy, Tennyson. Do you know it?" No more, after the second hour of drinking, will he raise the question of what character in literature he most resembles, answering the question himself, "Sydney Carton," and then melancholily adding, "—all but the bravery." Farewell, a long farewell, to all his drinking! He, too, has been quenched in these labouring days. Pity his passing, and be not too severe on one who was after all a not too distant relation of Jack Falstaff.

## REFUGEES

London is, I imagine, at the present time fuller of refugees than she has ever been at any period in her history. Belgium presents a spectacle such as has not previously been known in our time. She is a nation in flight. One cannot pass down the Strand without seeing evidence of this tragic migration. Red 'buses carry her refugees in batches to the doors of relief offices, where men, women, and children, with their pathetic packages, dismount with the air of people who live in perpetual rain. They do not look exactly like figures in a grand tragedy. They simply look dismal, as if they had had a bad crossing ; they are washed out like women who have been sitting up all night with a dying man. Some of them are fortunately stolid, and accept their fate without losing the colour from their cheeks. But as one allows oneself to realise the meaning of this procession of homeless people in actual suffering, one cannot doubt that one is witnessing one of the most heartbreaking of the world's tragedies. Think for a moment what it would be to have London, or Glasgow, or Dublin in flight in this manner—what it must be to have a modern city foundering like the *Titanic* and its citizens scrambling out for dear life, and with no time to gather up all those little follies of property which yesterday were the main source of one's pride in being alive. One can fancy the wild march of the millions of London—ladies from Mayfair, hooligans, poets, grocers, publicans' assistants, navvies, clerks, children from the slums, old men, milliners, newsboys, coal-heavers, mothers—toiling, with something of the lost look of Napoleon's

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army retreating from Moscow, along the roads that led to the harbours where the boats for America lay. One's property would have become worthless as dust in a single night; one's home, one's world in little, no better than a barn. There are, no doubt, many of the more prosperous Belgian refugees who have not been left quite so impoverished as that. But how many thousands there must be whose fortune is scarcely more than the clothes on their backs! That is a fate which might befall any of us so long as the era of wars of conquest lasts. In justice, indeed, one would think it ought to have fallen on almost any of us rather than the Belgians. They are not sufferers from any ambition of their own. They suffer simply because they happened to be in the way.

There is no figure in legend or history that makes a greater appeal to the imagination than the fugitive, whether it be Cain flying from the side of his murdered brother, or Lot and his wife escaping from the cities of the plain, or Noah and his caravan of two-legged and four-legged animals going aboard the ark with the threat of the floods pursuing them. There are few incidents which seem in the same measure to gather up into themselves all the world's romance as the flight of Joseph and Mary and the Child into Egypt. In glancing back over history, indeed, one can almost persuade oneself that it is the fugitives that have inherited the earth. Half the great characters in history seem to have been fugitives at one time or another, from Moses to Plato, from the Christian Apostles to Mazzini. One sees in the Jews an example of an entire race of refugees, and in the United States of America an instance of a nation with refugees for its first fine citizens and its patron saints. The world owes almost more to its runaways than to its soldiers. Every student of industrial history knows the debt of England to fugitives from France and Flanders. Low Country-

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men brought cotton to Lancashire. It was the Flemish weavers flying from the Spaniards who brought over the silk manufacture. Huguenots took linen to Ireland. Glassmaking came with refugees from France and Italy. It is probable that nations owe far more to being invaded by refugees than to being invaded by conquerors. It is refugees, not conquerors, who are the advance guard of internationalism. It is they and not the warriors who spread culture over the earth. None the less there is infinite tragedy in their fate. One thinks of the evicted nation as a crucified nation. There is hardly anything which human beings dread more than exile. I do not mean by this the voluntary exile of the adventurer, the colonist. That is one of the lures of youth. It is a step into the light. Real exile is another matter. It is an escape as it were from a falling house, a flight into the unknown. Not always is the exile in the bitter case of those wanderers who sat down and wept by the waters of Babylon. But if he is conscious of his exile, the world cannot but be a vast prison to him. There is no liberty for the man who has not the liberty to go home. The refugee is a man driven out with a flaming sword. The world had its fill of Russian, Italian, Polish, and Irish exiles in the nineteenth century. So numerous were they that a new nation might have been made of them. They were so abundant that people in the end began to get a little tired and even to see the funny side of them. Not all of them had the passionate dignity of Mazzini, who wore mourning for his country as though it were in the grave. But even Mazzini rather puzzled some of his friends in England as though he were a monomaniac, a man with a fixed idea. Probably one does become a man with a fixed idea if one is without a country, just as one would become a man with a fixed idea if one were without food. It may be that it is easier to live

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without a country than without food: the way we see Germans and Irish settling down in America and forgetting their old homes suggests that it is. But even they, one imagines, never quite forget the skies they have deserted for the commoner skies they have taken in exchange. They would not go home except for a holiday, but the songs they like best to sing are songs about home. They would feel traitors and runaways if they did not pay this lip-service on at least one day in the year to the country of their birth. That it is so often mere lip-service, is, perhaps, the reason that has made Turgenev and Mr. Conrad so severe on the Russian exile. One remembers, too, Mr. Kipling's parody on the "Exile of Erin" who had no sooner set foot in America than—

"He was Alderman Mike inthroducin' a Bill."

Unfortunately, Mr. Kipling is constitutionally unfit to distinguish between the tragic kind of exile and the comic kind of exile. He is the grand indictor of the unsuccessful races, and he does not recognise the right of the loser in the fight to carry his sorrows with him to a home that is no home in a strange land.

In this Mr. Kipling is at odds with the sense of the human race. Man has from very early times regarded the fugitive as in some manner a sacred person. He has provided in his temples and his churches a sanctuary where the pursuer cannot reach him. Even the murderer flying from justice could claim the right to be left unharmed when once he had gained the seat of sanctuary beside the altar. So strong is the human instinct for punishment, however, that the right of sanctuary was in many countries, like Germany, denied to murderers and other criminals. But the idea of a sanctuary or some similar place of refuge prevailed unto comparatively

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modern times in most countries. The criminals of London used to gather and defy the law in that part of the city which lies between Fleet Street and the Thames—Alsatia, as it was called. Possibly some instinct in us, something deeply rooted in the religious spirit, tells us that we are all in some sort refugees, whether we picture ourselves as flying from the Hound of Heaven or from the wrath to come. And in still another sense the human race has often been depicted as a race of exiles. We are exiles, if not fugitives, from the perfect city. We are sojourners and strangers under the sun: we build houses of a day in the valleys of death. There seems to be no patriotism of the earth for many of those, like St. Paul, whose patriotism is in Heaven. Their psalms and hymns are like native songs remembered by those who will admit no citizenship here. The saint is still a foreigner in every land, a sorrowing refugee from skies not ours. Most of us, however, make our reconciliation with the earth and become her naturalised subjects; a few, like Meredith, even find in her a goddess to worship. But it may be doubted whether the greatest worldling among us is not sometimes haunted by the feeling that he has no home on the earth save as a naturalised alien.

And so, in the last analysis, these refugees, with their little scraps of red, yellow, and black ribbon on their breasts, who run into us at every street corner, are nearer to us than cousins; they are our images and shadows. They are types of a race that comes and goes like the swallows and have no continuing city upon earth. They are doubly stricken, however. They fly from a double doom. They are pursued not only by the terror of death, but by the terror of life. They are poor, blind things in a rout, broken families, mothers who have lost their children, helpless as cattle on a ship during a gale. One realises something of the

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endless tragedy of their case when one reads how some of them leave notices chalked up on walls and doors along the roads as signals to their friends:

*Pieter Vaubelle is at Putte.  
Jan Dewilde, come home.  
Louis Vernilge, where are you?*

It is the restoration of these poor, lost creatures to the kingdom of their old lives and liberties that is the object for which one most immediately and passionately longs in this war. In the inhuman dispersal of the Belgian people we see the darkest condemnation of the German cause.

## COWARD CONSCIENCE

It is impossible to follow the procession of excuses with which one German apologist after another attempts to justify the violation of Belgian nationality—a still more abominable crime, by the way, than the violation of Belgian neutrality—without being reminded of *Æsop's fable of The Wolf and the Lamb*:

"As a wolf was lapping at the head of a running brook he spied a stray lamb paddling at some distance down the stream. Having made up his mind to seize her, he bethought himself how he might justify his violence. 'Villain!' said he, running up to her, 'how dare you muddle the water that I am drinking?' 'Indeed,' said the Lamb humbly, 'I do not see how I can disturb the water, since it runs from you to me, not from me to you.' 'Be that as it may,' replied the Wolf, 'it is but a year ago that you called me many ill names.' 'Oh, sir!' said the Lamb, trembling, 'a year ago I was not born.' 'Well,' replied the Wolf, 'if it was not you it was your father, and that is all the same; but it is no use trying to argue me out of my supper'—and without another word he fell upon the poor, helpless Lamb and tore her to pieces."

"A tyrant," runs the moral of the story, "can always find a plea for his tyranny."

It must be a constant source of amazement to the angels that so few of us mortals have the courage of our crimes. We go about restlessly seeking some means by which we may excuse them as virtues.

## COWARD CONSCIENCE

Not one in a million of us can lay claim to the "robust conscience" which that taloned young creature, Hilda Wangel, used to desire in her heroes. Our consciences are yellow cowards which have no more appetite for sin than a boy in the preparatory school for plug tobacco. They could sit down heartily to a table of sins so long as these were cooked into imitations of the virtues, just as any of us might make a cheerful enough meal on the flesh of horses or cats provided they were disguised as oxtails or rabbit or stewed beans. Every one has heard of the man who had eaten a plate of horseflesh with relish under the idea that it was Christian food, and who, on hearing what he had eaten, at once became violently sick. Conscience is not usually so squeamish as that. Having by error got its teeth into iniquity, it decides, as a rule, to make the best of a bad business—that is, to pull a long face and say no more about it.

But why is it that we cannot be honest in our immorality? Why is that we cannot say, "Evil, be thou my good," and openly live in that midnight philosophy? It may be that we are afraid of shocking others because we know that most of our plans depend upon the good will of others for their accomplishment. But surely it would be possible to found a secret society of evil men who would be bound—by self-interest, if not by the virtue of an oath—to push each other to success. I cannot think it is entirely the opinion of others that forces us all to study with such passion the grammar and accent of virtue. It is for our own satisfaction, and not for our neighbours, that we thus practise the gait and speech of morality. Let our consciences lose their hold on good—or, at least, the pretence of it—and we feel as helpless as if we were in a ship that had lost its rudder. It may be only nervousness at having wandered outside

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the conventions : possibly we would be as chicken-hearted in presence of new virtues as of new sins. Even so, however, our alarm before new virtues is usually due to the fact that we regard them as sins. They seem like outrages on the standard of virtue under which we are gathered. It is necessary to our peace of mind that we should never feel we have betrayed that flag. Everything we do we must be able to represent to ourselves as something done in service to it. Conscience would assail us as traitors if we boldly changed our allegiance to the flag of evil. The truth is, we are slaves to virtue—or to whatever can dress itself out as virtue—as surely as though our flesh and blood had been sold to it in some savage market-place.

There are more than one possible explanations of this Egyptian bondage. It may be the result of a thirst for righteousness, as natural as our thirst for air. Or it may simply be due to fear of the penalties for ill-doing. We know that Nature and society have each their retinue of spies and executioners, and that neither Nature nor society is likely to let us off until they have exacted the uttermost farthing. Probably in most of us, there is an inconstant balance of righteousness and fear. It is the same with nations and individuals. They feel partly a desire for righteousness and partly that they can only betray righteousness at their peril. Man, however, has been a deceiving animal ever since he made acquaintance with the serpent. The history of magic is the history of a foolish race which has always believed it possible to make an imitation of a thing which would be as good in most ways as the thing itself. Imitative magic was supposed to command the heavens, to give one power over one's enemies, to deceive the listening gods. If you called a child by a name not its own, it was believed that the gods would not know of

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its existence, and so would not compass its death, just as if we call sin a virtue, we still believe that the gods will somehow or other be tricked, and will, therefore, not be tempted to punish it. That is how it comes that Germany has been driven to explain that her invasion of Belgium was Russia's fault, or France's fault, or England's fault, or even Belgium's fault; the last thing she is willing to admit is that it was one of those simple selfish crimes which Empires have committed over and over again, since the day on which the first conqueror led out his naked followers with their bloody stone hatchets. Germany calls deliberate aggression self-defence, and thinks that by doing so she has succeeded in squaring things with Rhadamanthus. On the whole, one would be more inclined to respect her if she would blaspheme Rhadamanthus and avow herself unjust and an unbeliever. Or would one not? It may be that one gets a certain comfort from seeing a nation taking off its hat to justice even if it passes by on the other side.

So long as a man professes a belief in virtue, we feel that at least we—who also profess a belief in virtue—have some common ground upon which to argue. To attempt to make the worse appear the better reason is in itself to pay a sort of homage to the better reason. When the average anti-Socialist used to denounce Socialists and Trade Unionists as persons who would interfere with freedom of contract—the freedom of the worker usually being either to starve or to take what was offered to him—he appealed to a fine ideal in a false way. Men's consciences, however they may allow them to throw justice and decency to the winds in real life, will never allow them to throw justice and decency to the winds as aids to an argument. They are as unscrupulous in their profession of good as in

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their practice of evil. The human race is never so dishonest as when it argues. There were many admirable examples of dishonesty in argument during the recent fight against the Home Rule Bill. The only argument which the Unionists did not use was the honest argument of selfishness—the argument that Ireland must not have self-government because they believed that it was to the interest of their country and their party that Ireland should remain in subjection. Instead of this they argued, on the one hand, that Ireland was so loyal that she had ceased to want Home Rule, and, on the other, that she was so disloyal that she wanted separation. They protested that Ireland was so poor that she could not afford Home Rule, and, at the same time, that she was so prosperous that she did not need it. They declared that Ireland enjoyed equal rights with England by being allowed to send representatives to a Parliament in London, yet in the next breath they denied that Ulster would enjoy equal rights with the rest of Ireland by being allowed to send representatives to a Parliament in Dublin. They ridiculed the idea of treating Ireland as a separate entity and swore violently when anyone refused to treat Ulster as a separate entity. They urged Protestants to fight against Home Rule on the ground that it would hand Ireland over to Popery, and they urged Catholics to fight against Home Rule on the ground that it would hand over Ireland to anti-clericalism. Æsop's Wolf was not half so ingenious in its argument with the Lamb as these Unionists were in discovering new reasons for making a meal of Ireland. And the worst of it is, so little active intelligence do even the virtuous possess, that many sincere and kindly people were taken in by this sleight-of-tongue. That is what drives one to despair. No honest Englishman could have used such arguments for the subjection of

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Ireland, just as no honest German could use the ordinary Prussian arguments for the overrunning of Belgium. But it is always possible to invent a case by which any number of sincere and kindly people will be taken in. We who are able to see the tragedy of King Lear as a whole are not likely to take sides against him with his cruel daughters. But suppose we had been his contemporaries. How could we have withstood the sweet reasonableness of Goneril's statement of her side of the case for getting rid of the old man and his retinue :

“I do beseech you  
To understand my purposes aright :  
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise,  
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires ;  
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold,  
That this our court, infected with their manners,  
Shows like a riotous inn : epicurism and lust  
Make it more like a tavern or a brothel  
Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak  
For instant remedy.”

There you have coward conscience, eloquent and plausible, afraid of nothing except of admitting the truth. Not one in a million Gonerils will say straight out : “I have the power and mean to use it. I regard everyone of whom I can make no use as a nuisance, and will get rid of him as I would of the body of a dead dog.” Goneril could not have said that, even in the phrasing of a Shakespeare, without feeling a good deal more of a devil than she did feel and making herself unhappy. We can always remain moderately happy so long as we are able to keep up the pretence that we are doing right. That is what we call having a good conscience. Very few of us have the honesty or the common sense to see that to have a good conscience

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when one is not doing good is merely to double one's sin. It is far better to have no conscience at all. We may be sure that the statesmen of Germany have a perfectly good conscience in regard to Belgium: that is the worst of them. A good conscience is almost as easy to get as a bad reputation. Nor have the Germans a monopoly of it. There has always been a tremendous demand for it in England, too, ever since Henry VIII. cleared his conscience by abjuring the errors of Rome. Those Englishmen who ordered native Indians to be tied to the mouths of cannon and blown from them did so, beyond a doubt, with a good conscience. Even Bernhardi, who has a great name for callous Machiavellianism, continually pauses to wag his good conscience at us, and to explain what benefits the forcible extension of German culture will bestow upon the world at large. On the whole, the nation or the man with a bad conscience is in the more hopeful condition. A bad conscience is a conscience that, however nervously, is facing the facts. Is there a single nation in the world that has a bad conscience at the present moment? If there is, let it hold up its hand; it is the hope of the human race.

## ON DOING NOTHING

Sometimes one looks forward to a holiday as a period of entire laziness. One longs to do nothing—to lie in the sun on the edge of sleep—to be no more awake than is necessary to enable one to enjoy the consciousness of one's nine-tenths slumber. So one builds oneself a castle of indolence high above the echoes of the working world. One is glad above all to escape from the groaning and grunting of wheeled things, which is the music of the modern city. One desires to get away from that rasping, lumbering activity of trousered mortals, which is so unlike the careless activity of the angels, so far as authorities instruct us on the matter. Eye, nose and ear are, all of them, violated a thousand times a day in the streets of the moneymakers. No flower blooms from the walls of the Bank of England; wild roses do not grow in the Strand; larks do not challenge the sky from the asphalt of Trafalgar Square. Instead, one has the sound of wheels and hooters, the smell of petrol and bars and tea-shops and dog-shops and chemists and human beings, the contact with men and women who are less real to one than figures in a dream, the spectacle of a multitude of hats and trousers and skirts, of shop-fronts with ever so commonplace letters over the window, of traffic discoloured and confused, of policemen, of old men selling the *Westminster Gazette*, of hearse and prison-van, of waste-paper and dust-cart, of posters of revues that are mere vulgar aphrodisiacs, of creatures-that-once-were-men selling matches and bootlaces, of cats crossing the road, of milkmen that make a noise

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like some obscene fowl. It is the most infernal medley the world has ever seen. It is quite unlike the medley of a fair, which is a holiday from the month's quietness and which is after all for the most part idleness and a game. A fair is the concentration of a countryside, a gathering of the farms. It is as full of animals as a menagerie, and the men and women at it are as interesting as the animals. Some people find in the day-long conflict of town streets an even greater fascination. They see in the town a permanent fair, with juggler and clown and ballad-singer no longer in the market-place but in the music hall, with shops taking the place of booths, and with a thousand concerns scarred and printed on the faces of those who pass by such as the countryman never knows. Even so, the fascination of town is a fascination that exhausts. And the burden of money-making is on too many shoulders, the noise of money-making in too many ears. There is no leisure in this quest. It is all a songless procession of men and women who have forgotten the fields and have not yet found the city of God.

One feels at times that one must escape from this procession at all costs, and fly back into the country. One feels (to change the image) that the harrows of the day's work have broken one sufficiently, and one would gladly lie fallow. And yet, when it comes to the point, there is not one man in a thousand who can acquire the perfect habit of idleness. Some men are so bound to the interests of townsmen that the holiday they prefer is a visit to strange cities. They hasten through art galleries and museums and churches and historic buildings between meal and meal. They follow the beaten track with enthusiasm, not for anything that it leads them to, but simply because it is the beaten track. They reckon up the spoils of the day by number

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and not for their beauty. Their greatest delight is to be a part of the crowd, to share its excitement, its movement, its flow of life. There are, I do not deny, persons who make holiday in cities, not as particles of a crowd, but as individuals. But these are exceptions, and as a rule are persons of some leisure who are not too closely penned in streets during the working months of the year. Even among those who choose the sea for a holiday there are few who are content with mere indolence. Indolence to most of them means another hour in bed in the morning, and no man giving them orders during the day. If they were asked to be idler than that they would yawn their heads off before the evening of the first day. There must be a theatre, where they can book seats for *Daredevil Dorothy*. They would be unhappy without moving pictures, and a pier with a band playing, and winter-gardens, and tea-shops, and a dancing-hall. They eat a five-course dinner while the sun is setting, and while the twilight is changing the colours of the world they play auction-bridge in the hotel drawing-room. With them, too, a holiday consists principally in exchanging one crowd for another—in mixing with a crowd that is spending money instead of with a crowd that is earning it. I do not pretend to be untouched myself by this love of crowds, especially of crowds that are spending money, and are, therefore, living not as they have to live, but as they desire to live. But I would not choose their company for a retreat into idleness.

As a matter of fact, true idleness is scarcely possible for a rational being. One may try to achieve it by lying in bed all day, but even if one lies in bed till dinner-time one will be busying oneself about the sights of the streets at midnight, and exhibiting strange energy in cafés and at coffee-stalls. Stevenson preached idleness to a less driven

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world than ours, but he himself was not idle. On the contrary, with his reading-book in one pocket and his note-book in another, he now seems to us a character almost worthy of the pen of Samuel Smiles. The perfect idler would never be at the pains to write his apology. The Stevensons and the Thoreaus are merely humbugs when they pretend to be more indolent than shopkeepers. Even the laziest of us cannot go on a holiday without waking into some kind of activity a hundred times a day. We lie, sheltered from the wind, on a slope of heather above the sea, oblivious of the world and the world's war. A little boat appears below us with two men in it hauling in a brown net over the stern. We cannot help bestirring ourselves. We cannot help watching for the bulge in the net and the silver shape where a fish is entangled. We count every leap in the net as it is gathered into the boat. We take part in the energy of the fishermen. We notice that one of them is wearing boots that are large and bright. We look again and see he is a village policeman. The men land at a boat-slip and haul their net on to the stone. They untie a thousand knots with infinite patience, and after each untying throw a fish to flap its tail on the ground. Then the policeman carefully takes hold of a long, lean, white-bellied dog-fish, and without mercy dashes its head against a rock and flings it back dead into the sea. A few knots later, he takes out a sea-urchin like a little pink hedgehog and holds it high up for us to look at. Our indolence has been broken in upon. We cannot be indifferent to such happenings. Next, we hear a chirrup like a cricket's a few yards behind us. We look round and see it is a bird fluttering from stone to stone. We wonder what bird it is—whether it is a stone-chat. A long, bright green insect, a sort of beetle, with gold spots on its wings, flies among the grass-

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blades near us, and again arouses our inquisitiveness. We have not even the satisfaction of being able to give a name, though it be a wrong name, to him—surely one of the lasting happinesses of life. We call him vaguely a green beetle, but we know that he will haunt us all our days until we are able to pin a more definite noun upon him. Another beetle passes along a footpath in the grass, mirroring green and blue in its ugly body. Everywhere the day is thronged with events. One cannot move a step without coming upon some peeping orchis, blue as a violet and tinier, or upon other larger orchises with blossoms curiously marked so that they seem to be standing about in cotton-print frocks. And if one looks from one flower to another one finds always a little—an excitingly little—change in the pattern. Heather has begun to bloom, and heath-bells ring on all sides as one walks, and the bog-myrtle is fragrant as one's foot presses on it. Scabious blue as the sea edges the cliff; the lesser celandine and shepherd's purses sprinkle the world with gold; and yellow irises dance in the wind like Wordsworth's daffodils. Everywhere the bog-cotton rises with its three white plumes, sometimes nodding like the plumes in a warrior's helmet, sometimes waving like the pennons of a lance. It seems in the wind like some fairy host advancing with banners streaming. If one opens one's eyes at all there is no escape from the miracle of the flowers.

And one is continually compelled to open one's eyes. No man on hearing a lark singing between two hills can help looking up to see where it flutters and dances on its wings. One gazes at it as the heart of all music, the expression of the world's happiness. Everywhere in field and farm one sees animals doomed to die violent deaths—the servile brood of hens, sheep that move like a gang

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of slaves, geese with their necks stretched in a pretence of valour, black cattle that graze on the distant mountainside looking like little wooden figures out of a Noah's Ark, young turkeys with humped backs and plaintive cries, pigs that are jests in the flesh from their grunting snouts to their curled tails, calves that never smile even when they frisk like dervishes. But over them all dances the lark in the air, an optimist, a reconciler. And the world is well worth a song. Down the side of the mountain the sunlight flows like running water, chased by a shadow. Below lies the sea, variable in colours as a pigeon's neck—repeating the crowded sky. Everywhere are hills—blue hills in the distance, purple hills after rain, scarred and shining green hills near at hand, rosy hills in the last light of the sun, brown hills in the twilight. Down from the sides of them at night red foxes scatter—poultry fanciers. On the lonely beach a lonely seagull stands. The village of white cottages on the shoulder of the cliff huddles in the gathering darkness like a flock of sleepy birds. There will be no real darkness to-night, for a half-moon has climbed above the hill, making the white house at the bottom of the sloping field glimmer like a spirit. Under its benediction one goes upstairs to sleep. One is ready to sleep, for one has been exceedingly busy all day . . . doing nothing.

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Germany seems to be the only country in Europe at present in which the soldiers are as ferocious as the journalists. Perhaps this is because in Germany so many of the soldiers are journalists. So far as one can gather from the descriptions of the Christmas truce on the battlefield, the common German soldier, is, like the soldier of other nations, a human being who is much more inclined by nature to friendliness than to hatred. But the scribbling German soldier, or the scribbling German sailor—who is almost always a general or an admiral—is as excitably ferocious as anything you could find in Fleet Street. He is about on the level of the Nonconformist journalist who recently spoke with withering scorn of those of his fellow-Christians who still believed in praying for their enemies. This is, one may admit, the ancient logic of fighting. The pagan in each of us wishes to give his enemies hell, not only in this world, but in the next. When the tipsy Orangeman shouts "To Hell with the Pope!" he probably expresses with perfect accuracy his opinion of the punishment which he thinks the Pope deserves; and I have heard a devout Catholic, at mention of Tom Paine, say with grim satisfaction: "He's sizzling in Hell now." If we can wish our enemies torture that will last through eternity, it seems rather absurd that we should be squeamish about causing them such pain and misery as we can during the brief interval of their habitation of the earth.

Our ancestors certainly did not shrink from the logic of punishment as regards either this world

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or the next. The history of penal methods, whether in England, France, Spain, or China, is a history of ruthlessness which is at times so horrible as to seem almost ludicrous. Ruthlessness, it was usually assumed, was the only safe way of protecting society against its enemies. Ruthlessness, the Count von Reventlows seem to assume at the present moment, is the only safe way of protecting Germany against its enemies. It is not apparently a matter of revenge so much as of policy. They defend the burning of Louvain, the shooting of hostages, the bombardment of undefended towns, the torpedoing of merchant ships and sending of their crews to the bottom, not as glorious acts of national hatred, but as the only means of terrorising the Allies into submission. One would imagine that, if ruthlessness has been found ineffective as a means of suppressing badly armed and badly equipped criminals, it must be found still more ineffective as a means of suppressing well-armed and well-equipped nations. And when the history of the present war comes to be written, I shall be surprised if even the German historians will not be found admitting that every act of inhumanity of which their army was guilty only resulted in adding to the number and strength of their enemies. There are Germans who point to the comparative peace and quiet which at present reign in Belgium as a proof of the wisdom of German policy. But no one will deny that a people may for a time be intimidated into silence by ruthlessness. What I do deny is that Germany is a step nearer victory as a result of her ruthlessness. The ruthlessness of Germany, we may be sure, did much to strengthen King Albert and his government in their determination to hold out to the last minute in Antwerp and to allow neither themselves nor their stores, neither their docks nor their shipping, to fall into

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the hands of pitiless enemies. Germany, indeed, by her conduct in Belgium raised not only Belgium, but half the world, against her. There are thousands of Englishmen, Scotsmen, and Irishmen now being trained to fight against Germany who would still be sitting at home reading the newspapers if Germany had not forced herself on their imaginations as a big bully torturing a people smaller than herself.

Whether bullying ever pays or not is a question which it is not easy to answer. Clearly, there has always been a great deal of bullying in the relations between strong and weak peoples, as there has been in the relations between strong and weak men. The big Empire has not won its way to its present position by what is called brotherly love any more than the big landlord or the big manufacturer has. On the other hand, there is all the difference in the world between bullying within limits and bullying without mercy. The Roman Republic bullied its provinces without mercy; the Roman Empire by comparison bullied them within limits. The merciless sort of bullying has usually been done either in the name of religion or in the name of culture. Nearly all the great acts of mercilessness which stain the pages of history were interpreted in terms of some lofty purpose like that with which the German apologists justify their creed of ruthlessness to-day. Alva felt no pangs of remorse for his cruelties in the Low Countries. On the contrary, he boasted that, apart from all the thousands he had slain in battle and massacred afterwards, he had delivered over 18,000 people to the executioner. Almost certainly, at the time, he had no doubt that he was establishing Spanish and Catholic culture in the Low Countries for ever. But what remains of Spain and her conquering hosts in those parts now? Nothing but a memory and a reviling. It would

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be straining language a little, however, to describe Alva's "Court of Blood" as a crime of culture. We find a much better example of the ruthlessness of culture in the scarcely less famous massacre of Glencoe. Here was a crime plotted by a statesman as civilized as the most civilized of Germans. The Master of Stair, as Macaulay says, was "one of the first men of his time, a jurist, a statesman, a fine scholar, an eloquent orator." He was good-natured, not disposed to cruelty, had "no personal reason to wish the Glencoe men any ill," and "there is not the slightest reason to believe that he gained a single pound Scots by the act which has covered his name with infamy." His aim in planning the most treacherous of crimes was neither personal greed nor personal glory. "His object," continues the historian, "was no less than a complete dissolution and reconstruction of society in the Highlands. . . . This explanation may startle those who have not considered how large a proportion of the blackest crimes recorded in history is to be ascribed to ill-regulated public spirit. We daily see men do for their party, for their sect, for their country, for their favourite schemes of political and social reform, what they would not do to enrich or to avenge themselves. At a temptation directly addressed to our private cupidity or to our private animosity, whatever virtue we have takes alarm. But virtue itself may contribute to the fall of him who imagines that it is in his power, by violating some general rule of morality, to confer an important benefit on a church, or a commonwealth, or mankind. He silences the remonstrances of conscience, and hardens his heart against the most touching spectacles of misery, by repeating to himself that his intentions are pure, that his objects are noble, that he is doing a little evil for the sake of a great good."

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Public spirit, therefore, is not only one of the most splendid virtues; it may also be one of the most dangerous vices. It is a vice on the part of every man who does not realize that it is as easy to disgrace one's country or one's party as it is to disgrace oneself by certain forms of wickedness. The German theory of the State, however, is that it is something which, like the superman, is beyond good and evil. From this point of view, the State can do no wrong. It is capable of but one virtue—power; and of one sin—feebleness. Those who admit this theory of the State obviously need not be disturbed even if one accuses them, in their public capacity, of all the crimes in the Newgate Calendar. As a matter of fact the Germans are seriously disturbed by some of the accusations that have been made against them. One day they preach ruthlessness, and the next day they spend in proving that they have not been ruthless at all. They are scarcely more bent upon defying the laws of war than upon proving that they have all along scrupulously observed the laws of war. The truth is, their theory of the State is the invention of their heads, not of their consciences, and they find themselves compelled to salute virtue even as they advocate new crimes.

One of the most interesting examples of a government's refusing to adopt a policy of ruthlessness has been resuscitated lately in more than one quarter. This was the refusal of the British Government during the Napoleonic Wars to adopt Lord Cochrane's "secret war plan" for the total destruction of the enemy's fleet. The Government Committee which considered the plan reported that it was effective, but recommended its rejection on the ground that it was inhuman. At the time of the Crimean War, Cochrane—or, as he then was, Dundonald—revived his proposals, but again they were

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rejected. One wonders what they were. Were they really an anticipation of poison gas? One would like to know what were the limits thus officially set to the ruthlessness of war. Certainly England has never been in want of advocates of ruthlessness. Mr. Norman Angell—with whom one may agree or disagree on general grounds—quotes several apt examples from British military writers in his book, *Prussianism and its Destruction*. Thus Major Stewart Murray, in *The Future Peace of the Anglo-Saxons*, which won the praise of Lord Roberts, derides “the sanctity of international law” as fiercely as any Prussian could, and inveighs against “sickening humanitarianism.” Dr. Miller Maguire, again, is quoted as having written in the *Times* during the Boer War: “The proper strategy consists in the first place in inflicting as terrible blows as possible upon the enemy’s army, and then in causing the inhabitants so much suffering that they must long for peace and force their Government to demand it. The people must be left with nothing but their eyes to weep with over the war.” This last phrase, which I believe is taken from Tilly, has been quoted several times during the present war as Bismarck’s, and has been condemned in accents of horror as an example of the atrocious Prussian theory of war. One knows very well that when Dr. Miller Maguire used it he did not mean to justify the horrors of Belgium or a slaughter of unarmed men and women at Scarborough and Whitby. But if we admit that his sentiment is just, how can we logically protest against these outrages? What are the limits of ruthlessness? Where are we to draw the line? It seems to me that the line is a rather vague one. I hold, however, that in waging war every nation must make up its mind to choose between the policy of “the less ruthlessness the better” and “the more ruthlessness the better”; and that deliberately to

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choose the latter is a crime against the human race. Spain of the Inquisition, Turkey of the Armenian atrocities—these are supreme examples of ruthlessness, and they are clear enough proof that ruthlessness does not necessarily lead to national greatness. England in Elizabethan and Georgian Ireland is another instance of ruthlessness, and has not English policy in Ireland been her crowning failure? Ruthlessness, no doubt, has its victories no less renowned than mercy. But, on the whole, the history of ruthlessness is not a history of triumph, but a history of imbecility.

## MYTHS

Credulous rationalists used to believe that myths were largely the invention of priests. That belief has been slain by the anthropologists, who perceive that myths have grown up everywhere not as deliberate impostures, but as the curly-headed children of good faith. Even the anthropologists, however, are inclined to regard them as the perversities of people very unlike and inferior to ourselves, called savages. One writer on the subject speaks of "the very peculiar mental condition of the lower races," and quotes Max Müller's question in regard to the primitive ages during which myths are invented: "Was there a period of temporary madness through which the human mind had to pass, and was it a madness identically the same in the south of India and the north of Iceland?" We need only reflect for a moment on the myths already produced by the European war to come to the conclusion either that the savage is not so mad as he looks or that we also are more than a little mad. Surely, it was out of "a very peculiar mental condition" that the myth of the 30,000 or 70,000 or 250,000 Russians who passed through England on their way to Belgium and France was born. And we may say the same of the myth of the Belgian children with their hands and feet cut off by Prussian soldiers, the myth of Lord Haldane's treachery, and half a dozen other myths of the moment, which are passionately believed in tens of thousands of British households. We know that in pious German homes myths of the same kind have taken the place of *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. I have no doubt that in France, in Russia, in

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Serbia, in Hungary and in Japan the war is producing an equally remarkable folklore. Now this is not the work of priests or of people whom missionaries would describe as savages. It is not even—except in the case of the Haldane myth—the work of newspapers. It is for the most part simply the work of the popular imagination, which, far more fiercely than Nature, abhors a vacuum. Ever since the world began, the popular imagination has been busily pouring into one vacuum after another all manner of beautiful and terrible and absurd things. It works with the dreadful persistence of an insect giving its bowels to its task. It will not rest until it has filled the throne of the universe and replenished with strange details the lives of great men and has made every hollow in our knowledge of places and people and things a little hilly hive of buzzing and tumultuous fancies. It does not love untruth more than truth, but neither does it love truth more than untruth. It makes use of every shade of both, as an artist uses his paints. Its aim is to convert life into a series of thrills, pictures, decorations and dramas instead of a mere formulated confession of ignorance. It is no more willing to say, "I don't know," than the traditional Irish peasant of whom you inquire the distance to some place or other about which he knows as little as he knows about Constantinople. Far from being agnostic, it is positive, creative—even riotously so. It does not scribble "Why?" all over the heavens and the earth as the men of science do. Rather, it populates the waters of the earth with sea-serpents, and the woods with dancing fairies, and the solitary house with its ghost, and the sky with the anger of God when it thunders and with the gentleness of God when the rainbow shines. Devils, goblins, griffins, unicorns, the sweet music of sirens, men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders, gods who married the daughters of men, scandal

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about Queen Elizabeth, giants, salamanders—here are things of a more enticing and haunting interest than any imbecile “why.” Here is not emptiness, but abundance—abundance more wonderful and coloured than the abundance of a fruiterer’s shop. Is it any wonder that few except the dull and the wise can resist the invitation to come and buy?

There is this difference to be noted, however, between the civilized man and the savage in regard to their myths. The civilized man is ever so much more eager than the savage to support his myths with evidence as if he were in a court of law. The savage is content to invent his myth: the civilized man is not happy until he has invented his evidence too. There was never a myth supported with such a mass of absolutely convincing evidence as the myth of the Russian troops in England. It was rare to meet a man in the street who had not a relative in some railway department concerned with passing the troops through, or who had not spoken to an engine-driver who had driven one of the trains that carried them from Aberdeen to Bristol, or whose most intimate friend had not taken a leading part in sending the transports to Archangel, or whose intimate general or colonel (whom Lord Kitchener could not possibly have any object in deceiving) had not confided to him the exact number of Russians on their way, or who had not seen them with his own eyes late at night in a little country station wearing huge beards and speaking a wild language which was neither French nor Yiddish, or whose friend in the Territorials, having promised to sign his name with two “t’s” instead of one if on arriving in France he found the Russians there, had doubled the “t” on his first postcard home, or—but one need not continue. One heard so many of these stories that one almost believed one had seen the Russians oneself. It is the same with the myth of

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the Belgian mutilations. It was impossible to meet anyone who did not know somebody—or at the very least who did not know somebody who knew somebody—who had seen the child with his or her own eyes. Every suburb of London, every town, every village, almost every vicarage, had its Belgian child *sans* hands, *sans* feet. One knew people who knew people who could vouch for it on the very best authority. The mutilated children had been sent in trainloads to Paris and in boatloads to England. To doubt a man's Belgian child soon became as serious a matter as to doubt his God. There are, I am sure, hundreds of men, and thousands of women, who would be willing to shed their blood for their faith in that Belgian child. At a recent meeting, where a well-known surgeon confessed his disbelief in such things, several of those present on the platform rose up and left the hall. To show anything except a blind unquestioning faith in the Belgian child was to be a pro-German of the most evil-minded sort.

Now the real sufferings of Belgium it would be almost impossible to exaggerate, and the story of those sufferings is an infinitely longer and more horrible story than the most long-winded or Sadistic version of the mutilated Belgian child. But apparently the public had to get into its mind some dramatic representation of all that horror, some representation which would be an easy and stimulating substitute for the prolonged study of a hundred thousand scattered facts. The ubiquitous Belgian child gave the public what it wanted—one of those favourite symbols in wartime when men like to picture themselves as the knights of God fighting against devils more atrocious than the Devil. But what puzzles one in the whole business is the way in which evidence in support of things which have not happened is invented among perfectly honest

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people. It is partly due to the fact that the majority even of honest people modify the nature of the evidence as they pass it on. One man passes something on to a friend as a piece of hearsay; the second relates it as something which a friend of his actually witnessed; the next man to hear the story makes it still more dramatic by declaring that he saw the thing himself. And even the third of these men may be, comparatively speaking, honest. He is frequently one of those persons subject to hallucinations who believe they have been present at what they have merely heard about, just as George IV. firmly believed that he had fought at the battle of Waterloo.

In private life we are, as a rule, somewhat impatient of the hallucinated man. We find it simplest to call him a liar and leave it at that. It would be a most convenient arrangement if human beings could be divided into those who are liars and those who are not, but such a division would be a classification for the sake of classification and would have small basis in reality. Whether we are liars or not depends largely on what we are talking about. When we are talking about something that excites us, we are more likely to invent than when we are talking about something which we can approach calmly. When a reader of the Jingo Press, for instance, is talking about alien enemies he finds it quite easy to invent the legend that the man with the German name who lives in the next street walks up and down his roof all night waving a red lantern to show the German airmen where to drop bombs. When not one person but a million persons simultaneously invent a legend of this sort all over a country you soon get a myth which the ordinary man believes a good deal more fervently than he believes the miracles of the New Testament. The story of the German governess in whose rooms the bombs were

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found, which went the rounds in England in the early days of the war, is an excellent example of this kind of collective invention or hallucination. As for the Lord Haldane myth, it is of the same order, though it is fortunately not quite so popular, being indeed what may be called a mere party myth. Still, the Lord Haldane who appears in it is a figure of the genuinely mythical order. One can imagine that in less prosaic days he would have appeared villainously in the forefront of many a popular ballad :

*"Childe Haldane stood at the War Office door,  
Stroking his milk-white steed."*

How many seemingly intelligent people there are who can even give you a detailed account of Childe Haldane's wickednesses! Only the other day a man—a voter, a taxpayer, and, possibly, a father—declared that he had personal knowledge of the fact that just before the war broke out Lord Haldane had written a private letter to all the officers in command of the different English naval ports telling them to cross over to Germany where they would have, of course, been interned. The myth-maker does not trouble to enquire even whether Lord Haldane is at the War Office or at the Admiralty or at neither. All he wants is a good whacking myth and before long his sleep becomes full of pleasant dreams of Lord Haldane's head on a pole as one of the new attractions of the Tower. Lord Haldane is only one of a score of people, indeed, whom the more unbalanced section of the public has condemned to the Tower since the present war began. He may be amused to recall that in the course of an anti-German agitation sixty years ago the public with equally acute imaginativeness committed Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to the same prison. In a letter from Windsor Castle on January 24th, 1854, Prince Albert wrote:

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"You will scarcely credit that my being committed to the Tower was believed all over the country, nay, even that the Queen had been arrested! People surrounded the Tower in thousands to see us brought to it! Victoria has taken the whole affair greatly to heart, and was excessively indignant at the attacks."

But it is very little use being indignant with a myth. Indignation has as little effect on a myth as on a bad egg.

I began by suggesting that myths were attempts on the part of the popular imagination to fill some vacuum or other. Surely the reason why the myths of the present war have been so much more on the grand scale and so much longer-lived than has been the rule in recent wars is that the conditions of Press censorship leave us with a world as void of news as any primitive jungle. We have not had news commensurate with the grandeur of the business on which the world is engaged and so we have had to invent the story of the war which our accredited representatives, the newspaper correspondents, are not allowed to see. It is as if the Press Censor had surrounded the area of the war with a high wall of paper on which no hand had written and had said to us: "Let each man write on it what he will." That is why we have been so strenuously scribbling all over those immense blank spaces like a child left alone with a lead pencil in a white-walled room. There we have written our epics of ghostly armies and inscribed our ballads of mutilated children and published to the world the story of the life and death of many a noble traitor. It will be interesting to see, when the war is over, how many of these scrawlings of the human imagination will survive. Even with a censored Press, it seems to me, the myth has little chance of survival as soon as it gets

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into the papers. Already the visionary army has melted into air—into thin air. The Belgian child is slowly melting. Even Lord Haldane is melting. The myths of savages grow with a certain gigantic slowness and they enjoy long lives like forest trees and tortoises, but the myths of civilised man last no longer than garden flowers, or grass, or cheese, or the daily paper.

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There is nothing which has been proved more clearly by the present war, if indeed it needed proving, than that civilization does not make for the decline of courage. The stories which are being brought in from the battlefields contain a superfluity of evidence that man is fighting as bravely in the twentieth century as he fought on the windy plain of Troy or at Marathon near the sea. It has often been the custom to regard courage as a peculiarly pagan virtue, easily undermined by Christianity, culture, and civilization. The Goths, when they overran Greece, deliberately abstained from setting fire to the libraries owing to the fact that—I quote Florio's *Montaigne*—“one among them scattered this opinion, that such trash of books and papers must be left untouched and whole for their enemies as the only meane and proper instrument to divert them from all militarie exercises, and ammuse them to idle, secure, and sedentarie occupations.” We know better than this now, and soldiers no longer defeat their enemies by leaving them their libraries. They do not even burn their own. The Germans are, compared to any other European army, an army of bookworms; yet the record of their bloody race across France is, in sheer warlike boldness, as amazing as anything in history.

It is the custom of most peoples to abuse their enemies and, especially in war time, to sneer at them as a mob of cowards. I heard a lady at a recruiting meeting the other day assuring her hearers in the traditional manner that the Germans were cowards to a man. It is a poor compliment to the armies of

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the Allies to suggest that a host of cowards was able to bear them back so long and so far. But the taunt is hardly worth mentioning except in so far as it reminds one that to denounce a man or a nation for cowardice is almost universally regarded as the supreme insult you can offer. Certainly one would rather be almost anything than a coward. Most people, I fancy, would prefer to be liars or wife-beaters or plunderers of the poor. One of the earliest fears of every boy who is not born, like Nelson, with the genius of fearlessness is that he may deserve the reproach of looking afraid. "Fear! grandmama"—so, the schoolboy learns, Nelson spoke as a child—"I never saw fear. What is it?" One learns in later life of Nelson's vanity, his treachery, his narrow and tyrannical ignorance in public affairs; but one never loses that first enthusiasm for his deathless courage. One finds a new hero in Mucius Scævola as soon as one begins to learn Roman history. Rousseau tells us that, when as a boy he heard the story of Mucius Scævola for the first time at table, his family "were terrified at seeing me start from my seat and hold my hand over a hot chafing-dish, to represent more forcibly the action of that determined Roman." I, too, long before I had ever heard the name of Rousseau, was eager to thrust my right hand into the blaze and so add another to the line of the heroes. A certain realism, however, always finally prevented me from putting myself too closely to the test, and the swift passage of a finger through the gas-flame was the nearest I ever got to Roman virtue. That one should feel like this at all, however, is suggestive of the instinct that is in all of us continually to challenge our bravery. In time of war many men enlist simply because they cannot endure any longer to leave that challenge unanswered. Goethe, we are told, no sooner felt afraid to do a thing than he did it. If he felt timid of climbing to

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the top of a high tower he immediately climbed up and became master of himself. Some men have the good fortune to be born with this mastery, but they must be comparatively few. A famous general—was it Havelock?—said that in every regiment there were ten per cent. heroes, ten per cent. cowards, and eighty per cent. men who were a mixture of hero and coward. There is more of David Balfour than of Alan Breck in most of us. We hesitate before we jump, and we earn our courage in the sweat of our brows. We have long since given up the aspiration to be Nelsons. We sympathize far more intimately with the ancient soldier who, on finding his limbs begin to shake as he went into battle, addressed them with grim humour: “ You would tremble much worse than that, my friends, if you knew what I am going to put you through before I am done with you;” and with the other soldier who, on being jeered at for his pallor and nervousness, replied to his tormentor: “ If you were half as afraid as I am, you would have run away.”

That, as a rule, is the courage not of men trained to danger, but of beginners. I have heard an artist who accompanied the Japanese troops in the Russo-Japanese war say that, on his first going under fire, he was so frightened that he bit through the mouth-piece of his pipe. He was regarded, he added, as a highly comic figure by the Japanese on account of his fears. It would obviously be impossible for soldiers to go on suffering from nervousness like this. They soon get hardened to the peril of war: it is not long before they cease to duck at the passage of bullets. A sergeant in the Royal Engineers described the other day how the British troops rushed into battle at one point singing and shouting: “ Early doors this way; early doors, 9d.” That is an illustration of the contempt for danger that soldiers, if they are well led, learn. One finds a still more ex-

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cellent example of the contempt for danger in a story in the *Daily Telegraph* about the crew of an English submarine which was fired at by the Germans while she was scouting :

"As she came to the surface her conning-tower was fired at. She submerged herself, and rested on the bottom. After four hours, the atmosphere having become somewhat thick, she came up for air.

"Her conning-tower was again a mark for the enemy, and one shot went through. Hastily plugging the hole, she was again submerged, waiting at the bottom until it was dark, when she came up and escaped.

"The young officer in command, in making his report, was asked what they did while on the mud. 'I did fine,' he replied; 'we played auction bridge all the time, and I made 4s. 11½d.'"

There you have courage as in the legends, as thrilling in its own way as that of Scævola. We may laugh at such schoolboy's courage, peacock courage, but how magnificently enviable !

So magnificent and enviable a gift is courage that it seems at times to be the indispensable virtue. Courage is the sword and the staff of virtue; without it virtue goes about unarmed. On the other hand, to bow down and worship courage, as we are sometimes inclined to do, is mere idolatry. It is almost as great a mistake, though not so foolish, as to sneer at courage as want of imagination. Courage, like a fine sword, may be in a noble or an ignoble hand. There was a leading article in a London newspaper the other day which asserted that courage could only be shown in a just cause, and that the difference between courage and ferocity might be seen in the comparison between the conduct of the Allies and of the Germans in the present

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war. This is nonsense and confusion. The charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War, which had certainly little to do with justice, was as memorable an act of courage as the stand of Leonidas and his men in the pass of Thermopylæ. Alcibiades, the exquisite traitor, was as famous for his courage as Garibaldi. Coriolanus made war against his city with as marvellous a heroism as he had shown in its behalf. Courage has been shown on the scaffold by murderers no less than by martyrs. Mr. Shaw once shocked the readers of a paper called *V.C.* by contributing to a symposium on "The Bravest Deed I Ever Knew" the opinion that Czogolz, who had just assassinated President McKinley, had shown the qualities that go to the winning of the Victoria Cross in a more conspicuous manner than anyone else he could think of. Indifference to death, the courage to face the fury of a mob alone, absolute self-sacrifice —one dismisses these as callousness in a fearless man of whose action one does not approve. One might as well, however, deny beauty to a woman whose morals one dislikes as courage to a man whose morals one dislikes. Every woman is the better for being beautiful, and every man is the better for being brave. But there are other gifts of wisdom, affection, and truthfulness, without which beauty and courage are the mere graces of animals. Wise courage, which at times seems to partake of timidity, is a far rarer thing than rash courage. This is the courage of the great statesman and the great soldier. It is the courage which often avoids the battle, the courage which knows how to retreat. Pericles had this kind of courage. "In his military conduct," says Plutarch, "he gained a great reputation for wariness; he would not by his good-will engage in any fight which had much uncertainty or hazard; he did not envy the glory of generals whose rash adventures fortune favoured with brilliant success

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however they were admired by others; nor did he think them worthy his imitation, but always used to say to his citizens that, so far as lay in his power, they should continue immortal, and live for ever." The most courageous action in his career, perhaps, was his refusal to go out and fight the Spartans when they invaded and pillaged the Athenian territory, and pitched their camp challengingly outside the city. "Many made songs and lampoons upon him," we are told, "which were sung about the town to his disgrace, reproaching him with the cowardly exercise of his office of general, and the tame abandonment of everything to the enemy's hands."

The history of war is a record of heroic retreats no less than of heroic charges. We have seen lately in the retreat of Joffre and French a wonderful feat of heroism of this order. For ten generals who have the courage to advance there is hardly one who has the courage or the cleverness to run away.

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I doubt if there is any belief more indestructible than the belief in the ultimate triumph of justice. It requires a cold-blooded philosopher to question it. The world has seen Poland dismembered, Socrates compelled to drink poison, and St. Peter crucified upside down. But these things are Devil's triumphs of a moment. Poland still lives as a faith, and Socrates as an example, and St. Peter survives in the stones of churches over five continents. While injustice seems to reign, we may believe that justice is in the tomb, but we also believe that it awaits a glorious resurrection. No Irishman has ever been finally disheartened by the fact that his country has been in subjection for seven hundred years; he would believe in inevitable victory even though it were to remain subject for yet another seven centuries. This faith in a different scheme of things from the scheme which is mapped in Whitaker's Almanack is a world-wide phenomenon. Each of us, in so far as we do not live for self-interest, is a predestinate soldier in ghostly legions: we march towards the morrow under banners announcing that justice we must have though the heavens fall. It is as though we claimed citizenship in two worlds at once—the visible world of the seven sins and the invisible world of the one righteousness which men variously call love, and truth, and justice. Not only this, but it is our instinct continually to call in the invisible world to redress the balance of the visible. We tell ourselves that the just man has fighting on his side unseen companies—the apostolic cloud of witnesses. We endow him in our imaginations with miraculous

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gifts, like the old Greek heroes to whom gods lent their aid in battle. We interpret the Biblical cry of triumph, "By the help of my God I have leaped over a wall," as the shout of a just man who has performed a wonder. Not we, perhaps, but at least our ancestors once did. And the prophecy that "one man shall chase a thousand" must have brought rejoicing to generations of Puritans, each of whom saw himself as the just man in pursuit of a multitude of naughty neighbours. The Christian imagination is tamer than the Hebrew, but it, too, trebles and decuples the powers of the righteous man. "Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just" has passed into a proverb; and has not a quite modern poet sung:

"My strength is as the strength of ten  
Because my heart is pure?"

We may well inquire what basis there is in fact for this heavenly arithmetic.

Napoleon did not quite believe in it. He even accused God of always being on the side of the big battalions. Wellington, too, said that he had heard people talk about a good general being able to defeat an enemy many times more numerous than himself, but that he had never seen it done. In 1870 the Germans defeated the French by consistently outnumbering them on the day of battle. They were 187,000 to 113,000 at Gravelotte; 155,000 to 90,000 at Sedan. "Therefore," says Captain H. M. Johnstone, discussing these facts in a recent book, *The Foundations of Strategy*, "it is the duty of Governments to enable their generals to meet 100,000 with 200,000, if this be in any way possible; and thereafter of the general to do his best to surprise the 100,000. For war is no idle game, and this branch of the etiquette of sport does not apply." Certainly, neither the courage nor the just cause of the three hundred

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at Thermopylæ helped them a whit more than did the ritualistic combing of their long hair when the Persian hordes came upon them, flogged into battle by their captains with long whips. If the Greeks had better fortune at Marathon, has not a German professor explained this by estimating that the army of Darius, instead of numbering 5,100,000, as Herodotus believed, did not contain more than 15,000 warriors, or a great deal fewer than the conquering Greeks? The same authority refuses to believe that William the Conqueror landed in England with a smaller force than Harold could bring against him. Harold, he estimates, had an army of about 4,000 instead of the 400,000 or 1,200,000 which have been freely attributed to him; and to meet this William was able to bring 6,000 or 7,000 men—many times fewer, by the way, than the old estimate of 32,000 or 60,000. Even if we admit the exceeding importance of numbers, however, the fact remains that they are not the final secret in warfare. "In war," said Napoleon, the prophet of the big battalions, "the moral is to the physical as three to one"; and, though the moral includes discipline and all manner of things, one cannot overlook the importance of the soldiers' belief in the justice of their cause. We are constantly told that the good soldier has no politics, and, as regards party politics, this is true enough. At the same time, soldiers, like other people, must have their opinions on the causes of wars, and they will not enter with the same heart into a war which they believe to be unjust as into a just war. In the present war we see each side taking infinite pains to convince itself of the justice of the cause for which it is fighting.

Each of the nations engaged makes desperate attempts to manœuvre its opponents into a position of manifest injustice. Mr. Lloyd George arraigns Germany and Austria as raiders of the little nations.

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The Germans denounce England as the engineers of a wicked plot to overwhelm German culture with the aid of European and Asiatic barbarism. Each country proclaims loudly that it is carrying on a war in defence of the rights of the weak against the strong. Each regards the case for the war put forward by the other side as lying and hypocritical. Call it hypocrisy or not, it springs from an old instinct which tells us that we must have justice on our side or we shall perish. Even Bernhardi, though he denies the existence of justice as between State and State, commends his creed of war to the moralist by the plea that all things are just in the furtherance of the interests of one's own State. It is a heathen doctrine. It is the transformation of the old tribal god into a new tribal ethic. According to this theory, every war is a just war in which you are victorious. The saying "My country, right or wrong," loses its meaning, for by hypothesis one's country is always right. One speculates as to the bewilderment a man like Bernhardi must feel when he reads how Chatham rejoiced to hear of the defeat of his countrymen in the American War. I may admit in confidence that I am sometimes puzzled what to think about it myself. For a man to be so eager for the triumph of justice that he would willingly see his country defeated to bring it about is a height of virtue which is almost inhuman. And yet men will sacrifice themselves and their children for justice, and no one will be surprised. Why, then, should we be astonished if a great man desires to see his country fall in the cause of a juster world?

The truth is, most of us are of two minds. We vacillate helplessly between the supreme claims of justice and the claims of our country, and, when they conflict, we are almost always of the Bernhardi party and take sides with the State. We say that

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right is might, but we do not believe it to the point of being willing to face an army almost single-handed, like Horatius Cocles, in the assurance of the justice of our cause. Yet every martyr believes this. He does not believe that right will necessarily bring him any personal victory; but he realizes that defeat in a just cause may often mean victory for the cause. It was so with John Brown. John Brown never fought half so well for the slaves as John Brown's body did. It is with spiritual, not with physical, power that the just man is thrice armed; but the spiritual has a way of drawing the physical after it, as in the case of Joan of Arc. There you have the case of a nervous girl in her teens leading strong men to do what no general of her time could make them do. She was worth to them more than a thousand thousand spears. She held up before them the divine justice of their cause as miraculously attractive as the brazen serpent. That is the difference between courage in a just cause and courage that has no righteous passion at the back of it. This we may admire; that we must emulate. There has seldom been more desperate courage shown than by the so-called anarchists of Sydney Street; but they do not raise up new generations of men to follow them to their graves. They have their appeal, no doubt, and the hushed readers of penny dreadfuls will always have a warm corner in their hearts for them. But it is only the courage of just men that raises up heirs to itself. Washington may have personally been no more fearless than Jack the Ripper, but the courage of Washington made a nation, while the courage of Jack the Ripper was turned into ineffectual vileness. We may be sure that Muggleton, the mad tailor who went boozing round the publichouses in the time of Charles II. and threatening damnation against all who refused to believe that the sun was four miles from

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the earth and that God was six feet high, was as ready to die for his faith as any of the Protestant martyrs of Smithfield. But it is no use being brave for foolishness. Bravery like this is as barren as a mule. We cannot but admire the heroes of fanaticism, but is only when their fanaticism is likened to some kind of righteousness that it makes any practical impression on us. Thus it is righteousness, justice, rather than courage, which finally appeals to us. It is justice more even than courage that is the soldier's grand ally. With courage, he may perish ; but with justice his cause cannot perish. "Thou hast left behind," exclaimed Wordsworth, addressing Toussaint l'Ouverture,

" Powers that will work for thee, air, earth and skies.

There's not a breathing of the common wind  
That will forget thee ; thou hast great allies,  
Thy friends are exaltations, agonies,  
And love, and man's unconquerable mind."

That is the most we can say of any just man. We know that he will help to bring back the world's great age, but we know that, however just he may be, his banners may fall a thousand times in battle before the golden years return. Faith in the justice of his cause, however, will make him rise and go on fighting again as he could fight neither for glory nor for his stomach's sake. "Travaillez, travaillez ! et Dieu travaillera !" was a saying that Joan of Arc loved. It expresses the unyielding faith of the soldiers in just causes in all ages.

## THIS LUXURIOUS EARTH

There is a fruit-shop in Piccadilly in the window of which little baskets of strawberries invite you to buy them for twelve-and-sixpence. If you count the strawberries, you will find there are about twenty-one in a twelve-and-sixpenny basket. Strawberries, in other words, after the death duties, after the land tax, after the super-tax, after the doubling of the income-tax, and during the greatest and costliest war in history, are being sold in London at between sevenpence and eightpence apiece. It seems an amazing thing, quite apart from the circumstances of the moment, that anyone should be willing to pay sevenpence—not to say eightpence—for a strawberry. Is the strawberry of April so much more fragrant than the strawberry of June? I doubt it. It is not the charm of savour, it is the luxurious charm of rarity, which makes people ready to pay the price of a poor man's dinner for an April strawberry. It seems to be in our natures to love what is rare more than what is beautiful. We like things because other people do not possess them. Who would be fascinated by diamonds if the cliffs were made of them? It is not the eye of the artist but the eye of the merchant which distinguishes the true diamond from the false. Let us only believe a thing is rare, and we take its beauty for granted. Publishers play upon this weakness when they issue costly books in editions consisting of a few score copies and pledge themselves to distribute the type immediately afterwards, so that the precious volumes can never become everybody's possession. It seems almost a sin against society to limit the production of beautiful things in

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this way. On the other hand, if everybody could buy them, nobody might buy them; and it is better to have beautiful books published in small numbers than not at all. Nor is the passion for what is rare an entirely vulgar passion. It preys upon artists as well as upon the bosoms of the rich. Rare things, strange things, precious things have a sensational importance which appeals to such born lovers of sensations. Great artists fight their way through this passion for sensations to the more austere passion for truth; but the minor artists frequently pitch their tents among the sensations as though this were the end of the world. It would be difficult, perhaps, for even a minor poet to sound the lyrical cry over a sevenpenny strawberry or a twenty-five shilling bundle of asparagus. But that is because the rarity which is expressed by sevenpence or twenty-five shillings is not sufficient to produce the necessary ecstasy even in a poet on a country newspaper. Suppose, however, the strawberry had cost a slave's life. Suppose the asparagus had been gathered by kings' daughters on the banks of an Eastern river—asparagus, I feel sure, does not grow in conditions of the kind at all—and were sold to none but kings and the friends of kings. Straightway the strawberry and the asparagus would take on a new value. They would become, from the sensational point of view, beautiful things. They would become themes for a Gautier or a Flaubert. Did not the most artistic of emperors, Nero, spend £30,000 on roses from Alexandria for a single banquet? Probably in this twentieth century you can buy roses as beautiful for a penny at Charing Cross. None of us is thrilled nowadays by the thought of grapes in January: they are too common. But a dish of ripe grapes in January was the most wonderful thing the mediæval Duchess could think of when Dr. Faustus put his magic at her service.

## THE LUXURIOUS EARTH

It would be possible to explain this passion for rare and strange things as something born of a winged imagination. It is a desire to escape from the common round. It is a protest against everyday. It is the choice of wine above water. Whether it is an excellent thing to pass one's life thus in exquisite quarrels with commonness is another matter. The imaginative life turns as easily to perversity as to glory. Imagination which is content with conquests of out-of-season strawberries will have no energy for flights where the morning stars sing together. The love of luxury is imagination with sleepy wings. Good poets have always had to protest against it, even to the point of praising beans. To desire difficult fruits too greedily seems in a measure to be a disparagement of life and the four seasons. Petronius describes a banquet infinitely more sumptuous than Plato's; but it is an insult to day and night. Even a drunkard on principle will shrink from the vulgarity of the parvenu who has wine instead of water poured on the hands of his guests. That is luxury turned to folly. It is quite unlike the luxury of a man who squanders his fortune on wines of delicate flavour. The latter is at least in love with a real thing: the former only with display. If Beaujolais were dearer than Chambertin, then the parvenu would drink Beaujolais. To him there is no difference between them except in boasting. Clearly it is impossible to enjoy luxury of this kind and life at the same time. The luxurious man pleases himself with the thought that he possesses what other people lack: in reality, he lacks what other people possess. Everything that happens in the ordinary course of nature is to him not a treasure, but a banality. He despises everything that is not purchasable—daffodils in March, and larks in an April sky, and the sun that rises and sets every day. He admires the beauties of Nature only if he has paid a large fare to reach

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them. He can admire the sun shining at midnight in Norway, or the snowy towers of mountains seen from the grounds of the most expensive hotel in Switzerland. . . . How one loves to rail at him! One feels as gay as a Pharisee among one's own frugal pleasures as one contemplates his million's worth of misery. One walks out over the little hills of this happy world as it goes swishing through space, and one boasts in one's heart that here for an instant one is lord of glistening growing things and a roof of music that one would not give in exchange for many sevenpenny strawberries—no, nor for thirty thousand pounds' worth of Egyptian roses. The luxuries of the earth are for the most part to be had without money and without price. Nature is gorgeous with them—the swan on the water brooding on its windy shadow, the round eyes of robins, the rooks that walk (absurd breeched creatures) among the long-haired sheep in the park, the argument of running water, of running children, the silver and gold of stars, the brief life of the almond blossom, the foolish nine-parts-naked man who plunges with grey head and crimson pants into the cold morning water, the willow that weeps above him, the blackbird that sings in the poplar beside the willow, the cloud that passes like a song, the hide-and-seek of squirrels—is it any wonder if the little hills clap their hands?

Children alone seem to be in full possession of the luxuries of the earth. To the child, the fact that a thing has happened before is no reason why it should not happen again, and happen beautifully: everything is exciting even at the fiftieth repetition. In moments of fear and pain the world may be full of horrible things, but it is never full of dull things. Mr. Chesterton has noticed the child's appetite for reality, and has been led by it to conclude that the child is the only sincere realist. The child does not

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weary of details as the rest of us do: it cannot have enough of them. If it wishes to hear about a railway journey, it wants everything from the beginning. The fact that you drove to the station in a green taxicab is to it full of romance. It would like to know the name of the porter who took your luggage. Every animal, every tree, every flower that you saw from the train is greedily visioned. What you had to eat and drink must not be left out. Does not a child get pleasure even from counting the stairs between one landing and another? How could boredom ever enter a house in which the staircase is a ladder of wonder? If you go into Kensington Gardens, you will see on all sides this childish appreciation of the luxurious world. To most of us there is nothing duller on the earth than those cylindrical tins in which coffee, Cerebos salt, and other groceries are sold. But give one of these tins to a seven-year-old child and he will set it afloat on the Round Pond, and he and his friends on the bank will steer it by throwing pebbles in the water round it all day long. Out of two tiny bits of wood and a sheet of paper a boat is made which is as thrilling to the imagination as the *Queen Elizabeth*. The drake that bobs his curly tail in the air while he drowns his coloured neck in the ruffled waves is a beautiful thing, but the ramshackle boat and the coffee tin do not yield to him in beauty. Near by, on the grass, a boy drags after him by a string a small and dirty cricket bat bound flat to the wheels of a broken toy. Apparently it is intended to represent a cannon, and the boy's friend pursues it with a fierce artillery of stones. As one watches poor children round the pond making their pleasure out of refuse and broken things, one is inclined at moments to wonder whether this happiness of invention, this self-reliant mastery of one's little world, may not be a greater possession than the nursed and taught amusements of richer

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infants. One would imagine that a child that has to look after itself, to say nothing of its sisters and brothers, from the age of five would grow up more powerful and resourceful and leader-like in character than a child pampered and nursed and school-mastered from the cradle. But clearly this is not so. This happiness with anything and everything is one of the compensations of the poor: it is not enough in itself to make poverty a blessing. The empty stomach, the foul air of the narrow street, the torn boot, the tattered shirt, the earsplitting school-room—these quickly tame the spirit that otherwise might have become too regal amid its treasures. These, and the need to serve—the need to serve moreover, in a manner and in a degree in which no human being ought to have to serve—in order to be permitted to eat at a table and sleep in a bed that would make most of us ill. Gradually in such a world a coffee tin ceases to be more than a coffee tin, and the stairs become a burden. It is so, of course, with all of us. But those of us who live above the poverty-line have other sources of luxury to take the place of pretence and toys. Not many, perhaps, if we lose entirely the spirit of the child, but enough to enable us at the very lowest to flit from one tedious place to another, and to have some novelty of choice among tedious dishes. I do not, I may say, myself find the world so dismal a round as this, and for my friends I desire some middle place between the extremes of tedium and penury. But if one had to choose between tedium and penury—who knows? On the whole, I lean to the seven-penny strawberry rather than to the empty coffee tin now that I have left the age of magic behind.

## ON SAVING MONEY

To save money is now the eleventh commandment. It is a commandment which many people will find it extremely difficult, and many others extremely easy, to obey. Some men are predestined to save money. It is no more a virtue with them than a bad digestion. They would save money on an income of a hundred pounds. Other men are predestined to spend money. It is no more a virtue with them than if they were to weigh fifteen stone. They could not save on an income of ten thousand a year. These are two races of men which will never entirely understand one another. The thrifty man will seem to his opposite a skinflint rather than a saviour of the State. The spendthrift, on the other hand, will not always be taken at his own valuation as a heart of corn and a generous fellow. He is the butt of the proverbs. The wisdom of humanity is against him. "A fool and his money," say the old wives, "are soon parted." "A penny saved is a penny earned," they add. "Take care of the pence," they develop the theme, "and the pounds will take care of themselves." The copybooks contain nothing so effective to warn the young against growing up miserly. It is only on Sundays that we are advised to take no thought for the morrow, and even then the text is rolled out for love of the sound rather than the sense. We seldom meet anyone above a schoolboy who interprets it literally. I have never known but one person who recommended it on the score of practical morals. This was when as a small boy I had more by luck than by judgment won a prize of a few pounds—fifteen or twenty, if I

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am not mistaken—but at least it was too large to be laid out with a good conscience on butterscotch, nougat, and cheap editions of the Waverley Novels. There was a theory that it should be put in the bank; but a charming lady in gold-rimmed spectacles and a lace cap, with her silver hair curled round little tortoiseshell combs on each side of her head, persuaded me secretly against this, alleging as a reason that to put money in a bank was to distrust God Almighty. Dr. Johnson, she declared, naming a clergyman much respected in the neighbourhood, had been vehemently of this opinion and had never put a penny in the bank in his life. I took Dr. Johnson in this matter—alas, in this matter only!—as my model, and no child can ever have paid so many visits to the confectioner's under the ægis of the New Testament. But it is as rare as a happy farmer to find the old exhorting the young to live dangerously in the matter of money. Even those who talk the most eloquently about living dangerously make haste to secure themselves against the perils of pennilessness. It is only the saints and the fools who live dangerously to the point of being ready to give away all their goods to the poor or anybody else who happens to be convenient. At the same time it is a remarkable fact that in the New Testament it is not the rich who waste their money that are attacked, but the rich who save it. Saving money is a virtue which has very little said in its favour in the source-books of Christianity. The man with the single talent is the type of the man who saves for saving's sake. I do not mean to suggest that the two other men in the parable of the talents were wastrels. But they were types of what may be called constructive saving. They did not save for saving's sake. They were not terrified of using money. They may have put it in a bank or invested it. They did not, at least, put it in an

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old stocking. They saved generously and not meanly. The other fellow was simply the mean man who takes no risks. To save money without being mean—that is the difficulty which to many young and fiery natures seems almost insuperable.

Certainly it is difficult to idealize a niggard or a miser. There are more people who can look tolerantly on the younger Cato's drunkenness than on the elder Cato's meanness. The latter's selling his old war-horse in Spain, in spite of a thousand associations, in order to save the expense of its transport to Rome has lived in history as one of the most odious actions ever performed by an illustrious man. Our instincts are impatient of such meannesses. They cry out against the reduction of life to a money measure. Obviously, if saving money is the highest point of wisdom, we must get rid not only of old horses, but of old men and women. Shylock's lament over his ducats and his daughter leaves him a tragicomic rather than a tragic figure. We hate to see the very heart and soul of a man haunted by money in this way. Scotsmen are more jeered at because one of them once said "Bang went saxpence!" —or perhaps a music-hall comedian invented it—than for any other reason. The Jews are also the subject of a thousand jokes on account of their "nearness," to use an old word, with money. *Potash and Perlmüller*, the Jewish-American play which has been entertaining all London, is simply a comedy of the shifting balance between thrift and human feeling. The French peasant seems in his attitude to money to be not unlike the Jew. Perhaps Maupassant's peasants are only the mechanical toys of fiction, but one cannot help suspecting that an anecdote from life is at the bottom of that story in which a mother is concerned less about her daughter's seduction than about the price the girl has extracted for it. The Irish had not till recently the reputa-

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tion of money-savers. But the plays of the Abbey Theatre have exhibited to us a peasantry as deeply absorbed in petty economies as the French or the Jews. We are shown in play after play small farmers haggling over their parents' deathbeds and over their daughters' marriage-portions. One would conclude from them that thrift rather than thriftlessness must be the leading Irish vice. I have heard it argued, indeed, that the Irish are wasteful merely in so far as they have been anglicized: that they have modelled themselves too slavishly on the most wasteful nation on the earth. Probably this is at least nine parts untrue. The English are certainly an extraordinarily wasteful people, but they are wasteful out of an abundance. There is a solvent wastefulness. They keep within the limits prescribed by Mr. Micawber for happy expenditure. It is (in the wealthier classes) individualistic, even egoistic, expenditure, but on the whole it is on the right side of bankruptcy. No doubt, the industrial revolution had much to do with introducing this element of practical sense into English wastefulness. The English aristocrat of the eighteenth century, even when he was a Prime Minister, was as extravagant and as cheerful under his debts as a stage Irishman. If there were a superfluity for everybody, one might rejoice in this golden open-handedness. But in a world in which the resources have never got quite fairly adjusted to the needs of the population one can only applaud spendthrifts with reserve. They are usually wasting other people's dinners. There is one curious type of spendthrift who is a spendthrift abroad, but a miser in his own home. There is scarcely a public-house without an example of him. His generosity is all selfishness. He finds it easy to stint his family: he finds it impossible to stint his boon companions.

Thus one can never judge a man merely by the

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fact that he saves or spends money. There may be all sorts of good or bad reasons for doing either. I knew a man who used to invite his friends to high tea, and who thought nothing of interrupting the conversation to adjure them: "For God's sake, go easy with the butter!" Even in so extreme an instance of economy as this it would be a mistake to dismiss the man as a miser. Men have a hundred motives for saving. They may be supporting poor relations, or devoting their money to a cause, or going to get married. As for the man who saves money without a considerable motive he is beyond understanding. I have known a rich man who would run himself out of breath for a hundred yards in order that his 'bus might cost him a penny instead of twopence. I have heard others relating with glee how they discovered a shop here and a shop there where they were able to effect some trivial economy at an enormous expense of labour. Saving money, I suppose, has with these people become a sort of game or hobby, like collecting stamps. The human being is a playful creature and must amuse itself.

Perhaps the official call for economy will result in the invention of a new game in which households will compete against each other in such things as miserly dinners. Certainly the new conditions will enable the least miserly to take up saving money either as a hobby or as a reputable mission in life. The generous man will no longer feel he is casting a slur on things in general by drinking water instead of wine, or by taking a 'bus where a taxicab would do, or by returning to his house with as much money in his pocket as when he left it. It is a *vin ordinaire* world into which the war has precipitated us. How skimping a time lies before us comes home to the imagination as we read the official German recommendations in regard to changes in the standard of living. Here is a typical passage from them:

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"The value of the refuse is frequently not realized. How much can be saved by peeling potatoes properly has already been mentioned. All meat and fish refuse should be carefully used. All bones, skins, sinews, and smoked rinds can be boiled down and used for soups and with vegetables, and from the bones, heads, and roes of herrings good sauces can be made, for instance, for potatoes. The waste from vegetables and fruit should also be used. Cabbage stalks and celery leaves when cut into small pieces make a good seasoning for many dishes; fruit peel and seeds make syrup, soup and jelly."

Starched ladies' petticoats and starched shirt-fronts are condemned, because starch is made from what might be used as food; and patriots are advised even to "economise soap in washing clothes, because soap is largely produced from edible fats." Who of us had ever realized we were living so luxuriously? Perhaps we shall yet be told that we shave too often or waste too much money on polishing our boots, or use knives and forks uneconomically on many articles of food for which our fingers would do as well. Assuredly the Simple Lifers are inheriting the earth. One foresees dismally a world of potato skins, cabbage stalks, and cold water. Aged *bon-vivants* will have to dye their hair and smuggle themselves into the Army in order to get a decent plate of roast beef. . . . But perhaps the prospect is not so black as it at first appears. After all, if one wants a charming dinner at a low price, the economical French are more likely to give it to one than the wasteful English. If the reign of economy results in the general spread of French cookery, there are a few scatterpennies at least who will not complain too bitterly.

## PEACE ON EARTH

Everybody desires peace as everybody desires to go to Heaven. Peace on earth, of course, not peace with Germany. Peace on earth means to the average man the liberty to wear a rosy face in the bosom of his family on Christmas Day, and the liberty to swell with a double dinner on Christmas evening. Possibly when he reads about the blessings of universal peace in the papers and hears about it from the platform, he interprets this as meaning the blessings of a world in which he could live thus rosily all the year round. Perhaps that is his vision of Heaven, too. Most of our visions can be interpreted in terms of the price list of Messrs. Fortnum and Mason.

Certainly when we try to fly a little higher than that in our visions of a better world we leave ninety-nine men in a hundred cold. There is nothing that the ordinary man shrinks from more nervously than the idea of having to live in one of those Utopias which various Pacifist and Socialist writers are never tired of painting. Even as regards Heaven as it is commonly pictured for us, he wants to go there not because he thinks it is preferable to earth, but only because he thinks it is preferable to hell. It is the same with our dream of peace. We love it not for its own sake, but only when it is contrasted with the filth of war. Even while we praise it most warmly we have misgivings. We wonder at times whether, after all, it might not mean the supersession of brave men with guns by base creatures with nothing but gullets. We can no more comfortably imagine a world without arms than the world as it would have been if Adam and Eve had not eaten the apple. We idealize the Garden of Eden, but we

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realize only this battered earth. William Morris tried to paint for us something like a Garden of Eden in *News from Nowhere*. But, radiant and embroidered with all the happinesses as that world was, the average man would as soon be a fish as live in it. We cannot get rid of the feeling that the air there is stagnant. And, as experiments have recently shown, even pure air that is stagnant has a more disastrous effect on us than impure air that is in motion. If this air that we breathe in the twentieth century is impure, it is still moving. We feel we are living in the great world and not in a glass case. The problem for the Pacifist, as for the Socialist, is to construct some other than a glass-case Utopia. Until he can do this, he might as well address his appeals to the wax figures in Madame Tussaud's as to ordinary men and women.

It is often taken for granted by the preachers of war-at-any-price that the Pacifist is condemned out of hand by his Utopia. But this is nonsense. No man is condemned by his Utopia. If it comes to comparing Utopias, what about the Utopia of the war party itself, supposing it to be logical enough to have a Utopia? If war is the supreme school of valour, as the Treitschkes and the Bernhardis seem to believe, how much of war will be necessary to give us a perfectly valorous world? Will a war every generation do? Or must we have a war every ten years? Or every year? Or every week? The truth is, none of the war-at-any-price party dare sit down and paint in detail his Utopia of carnage. If the Utopia of peace is like lukewarm milk with the skin on it, the Utopia of war is like blood in buckets. One may use the same method of answering those who frown contempt on the Utopias of Socialists and express their enthusiasm for a competitive world. Let them describe a day in their Utopia of competition and see if the result is not more horrible

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than the police-court news in a Sunday paper. Chemist would poison chemist, and draper would lie in wait for draper with his yard-measure. It would be a world in which the strong man would not temper his strength with pity or the cunning man dilute his cunning with morality. Every man would be at every other man's throat instead of, as at present, merely at his pocket. It would be a world mad with the beastliness at which even the beasts draw the line. This, however, does not disturb the anti-Socialist in the slightest. He judges only his neighbours by their Utopias. The fact is: the people who are most impatient with Utopias are usually those who are fairly well satisfied with the present day. They are the persons who are least affected by the horrors of war or poverty—these and the persons who are least hopeful of ever being able to get rid of them. There is no reason why anyone should be at all enamoured with peace on earth, if the earth as it is, dusty and deaf with strife, suits him (as he would say) down to the ground. That kind of man does not believe in the logic of war or the logic of competition any more than he believes in the logic of peace or Socialism. He believes only in the present day with the comforts, or it may be the bare necessities, it brings him. He repeats "Peace on earth" merely because it is an orthodox saying of the present era. He accepts it as he accepts a municipal gasworks. It is something already in existence, not a mere grasping after the air in the middle of next week. So long as he is not asked to look forward further than he can see through a telescope, he does not protest. But beyond that it is too distant from his fireside; it is a world of cold and inhuman places. The last thing in which man will become adventurous is sociology. He feels in his bones that the South Pole itself is a million miles nearer than Utopia.

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Is there any way of making the Utopia of Peace less null and void than it has a way of being at present? Or must Pacifists always be content to prostrate themselves before a negation, like Buddhists before the dream of Nirvana? "Where there is nothing there is God" runs a sentence out of which Mr. Yeats made a title for one of his plays. Are we also to rise—or, if you prefer it, to sink—into the faith that only where there is nothing there is peace? Not entirely. Perhaps, however, for the flesh-and-blood man there must be a certain nothingness about all ideals. It is the approach to the ideal, not the ideal itself, in which our realistic passions engage themselves with the greatest confidence and delight. The ideal is like the angle  $0^{\circ}$  in trigonometry: it is impossible to imagine it, and it is impossible get on without imagining it. So we take it for granted. It is equally impossible for bullying and quarrelsome creatures like ourselves to imagine Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity in their full implications with regard to human relationships. But France took the idea for granted, and, instead of worshipping it in its ideal nothingness, leaped towards it as if it were a real thing; and that leap was the French Revolution. That is the plan on which we are created. We understand the end chiefly in terms of a journey. Our goal may be nothing more than two sticks crossed by a third, but the whole passion of our life is in the heave and swing of the struggle to reach that goal. That explains why it is that so many Pacifists are fierce and fiery fellows. They have their eyes on the goal of peace, but in their essay towards it they, too, experience all the intoxication and fury of the great game of idealism. If you are in search of gentleness of speech, you might as well go to the battlefield for it as to Gustav Hervé or Emile Vandervelde.

Perhaps those who do most to discredit peace as

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an ideal are the people who wish to convert it into bourgeois politics. Peace means to them not the rise of a new civilization, but merely the setting up of a great fat policeman called Peace over civilization as we now know it. They want peace among the great Empires because war is so expensive. Their ideal hardly goes beyond an agreement between England and Germany to keep small, cheap armies and navies instead of big, dear armies and navies. People of this mood would regard it as an affair of minor importance if every small nation in Europe, from Ireland to Georgia in the Caucasus, were to be deprived of even the elements of self-government for ever and ever. Their denial of the right of war would include the denial of the right of insurrection, and, if they had their way, wars for liberty would be prohibited as severely as wars for plunder. One can, of course, understand and respect the religious objection to war—the objection of Tolstoy and the Quakers. There is something extraordinarily persuasive in Tolstoy's picture in *Ivan the Fool* of the nation that keeps turning the other cheek so often that other nations get tired of invading it and get won to its innocent love of peace. It is difficult to deny that such a miracle of childlikeness on the part of a whole nation might conquer the world. Certainly we shall be ready for the reign of universal peace by the time an entire nation can be found to turn the other cheek, not through timidity, but with cheerfulness and courage. But cheerfulness and courage are the only things which could possibly justify any nation or any individual in turning the other cheek in literal Christian obedience. Somebody once said that to be poor in spirit is a very different thing from being poor-spirited. If our love of peace is poor-spirited, it is no improvement on our fathers' love of war. There was a league formed a year or two ago called the

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League of Peace through Liberty. That title has a better ring about it than if it were a mere league for peace without any reservations. But, as a matter of fact, the number of persons, apart from religious idealists, who call for peace at any price is almost as small as the number of just men who could be found in the Cities of the Plain. Most of us believe in peace so long as peace is consistent with ordinary human decency. But when every reason for peace is stripped from us except selfishness or cowardice, then our consciences begin to whisper to us that war is at least better than that.

## GRUB

One cannot travel much in these days, even on the top of a bus, without overhearing a great deal of the conversation of soldiers. If the soldiers are strangers to each other, it is ten to one that, as soon as they have found out in what part of the country their respective camps are, they will go on to exchange experiences about food. "What's the food like?" "Oh, good food. Eggs and bacon for breakfast—" "Eggs? We don't get no eggs—except what's sent from home. We don't get no eggs, I can tell you. Eggs and bacon!" "Yes, three times a week. Oh, I reckon the food's all right. Then, for the rest of the week, herrin's—" "Herrin's! Cripes, we don't get no herrin's—" "Then for dinner some kind of meat, and peas—" "Peas? Help!" "And potatoes, and after that rice, p'r'aps, and stewed prunes." "'Strewh! You're lucky. Where I am you could 'ardly eat the food, even if there was enough of it. Our cook never washes 'is 'ands. Dirty, greasy 'ands 'e 'as. Puts 'em all over everything. It ain't food gets served to us. It's a mess. One day after dinner we was nearly all sick. Couldn't eat anything for twenty-four hours afterwards. Then, after dinner I likes a cup of tea. I don't reckon I've 'ad my dinner unless I get tea with it." "We 'ave tea." "I'd give anything for a cup of tea." "Oh, we ain't got nothin' to complain of," replies the other, with a slight, boastful yawn; "never tasted better grub in my life. 'Ow much d'you think I put on since I joined?" "'Ow much?" "One stone eight. One—stone—yte!" "Oh, go an' scratch your neck with a broken bottle," his wife

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jeers across the 'bus at him with a facetiousness learned in the music-halls. "'E's always boastin' about wot 'e eats," she tells the starved one. "'E wants 'is blasted fish filleted now!" . . .

There you have scraps of conversation, not invented in imitation of Mr. Pett Ridge, but set down as literally as memory and an incapacity for the correct misspelling of dialect will allow. They are typical of many soldiers' conversations that have recently reached one's ears in fragments. They are typical, I believe, of the way in which not all, but hundreds of thousands of soldiers talk. "All the boys as fit as fiddles," said a soldier to me some time ago, describing his regiment, "and the last thing you'd 'ear anybody mention is the war!" No doubt soldiers, like journalists, have their thoughts about Huns and the other things that are written about in the newspapers. But, unlike journalists, they do not devote twenty-four hours of the day to rhetoric. They hold fast to the more solid and permanent human interests. They do not make haste to anticipate horrors as do the "realize-the-war" school of speech-makers and leader-writers. They are patient of the passing day, and while there is sport to be had or food and drink calling for praise, they are not to be intimidated out of their enjoyments. This, perhaps, would not be a possible attitude for an entire nation in time of war. It may even be argued that it would not be a desirable attitude for an entire nation in time of peace. But, whether in peace or war, how infinitely healthier and more efficient it is than that rake's progress of hysterics without ideals which appeals to so many people just now as the most heroic form of patriotism. . . .

It is amazing, considering how curious and insatiate is the human appetite, that so little has been written in praise of food. There has probably been

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less good poetry written in praise of eating than of any other decent human pleasure. Drinking has always been recognised as a proper subject of poetry, but eating has only been introduced into literature comically and by the satirists. When Horace wrote of wine, he wrote as a worshipper. When he wrote of food, he wrote scornfully as an abstemious man who was content with beans. To be comparably abstemious with wine has at many periods been thought actually discreditable; as in Athens, where the enemies of Demosthenes tried to injure him by denouncing him as a water-drinker. Abstemiousness in food, on the other hand, has always been regarded as the mark of a hero and philosopher; gluttony, of a villain. Sulla was a glutton. Cyrus, Cæsar, and most of the great conquerors, were careless about food. Could Juliet have fallen in love with Romeo if he had had the gut of Trimalchio? Has there ever been a lover in literature who ate to excess? Even the authors who have praised eating with most enthusiasm have seldom praised it apart from liquor, though they never scruple to praise liquor apart from food. The aesthetes dwelt lovingly on ortolans, but it was ortolans plus Chambertin. What man of letters has ever glorified a teetotal dinner of six or seven courses? It would seem too disgusting. Perhaps in each of us there lingers just a suspicion of disgust against eating. We have no pleasure in contemplating all this energy of chewing and insalivation. There is humiliation in being so much of a beast. It was some sense of this that made Byron detest the sight of a beautiful woman eating. Probably there is a stage in the lives of many sensitive young amorous at which they share this detestation. Women used to be more aware of this than they now are. In the Victorian era, if we can trust the records, the girl who affected to be unable to cope

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with the undivided wing of a chicken was common enough at genteel tables. The genteel small appetite has disappeared as a convention. But in the bloom of life, it may be, lovers are still given to fasting in each other's company, not so much because they are absent-minded as because they have a feeling that eating is no business for creatures of ecstasy such as they. It is all part of the ancient disparagement of the appetite. Mr. Chesterton, if I remember right, once justified the praise of liquor rather than the solid foods on the ground that drinking has spiritual and imaginative effects such as are unknown to the mere eater. An excess of beer opens a door into a kingdom, if it be only for a moment. An excess of ham sandwiches—I think Mr. Chesterton used railway-station ham sandwiches in his illustration—only leaves the stodgy man stodgier than before. When Mr. Chesterton argued on these lines he had not seen the gleam that comes into the eye of a twentieth-century soldier at the mention of duck and green peas. One of the most remarkable results of the European war has been a great diminution in the praise of liquor and a parallel increase in the glorification of beef and bread.

As a matter of fact, the common man has never been a miser in his appreciation of food. It is only the poets and *genteel* persons who have pretended that eating is something which ought not to be discussed in polite society. Literature is a form of intoxication, and so men of letters, like other artists, have never tired of praising Bacchus and Venus. But the common people still march in the train of Ceres, and anthropologists tell us that even our Easter holidays are a celebration of the rebirth of the food supply. They go so far as to suggest that Christianity originated in the worship of a vegetation deity. Bethlehem, they assure us, should be translated the House of Bread. I confess to a

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rooted scepticism in regard to theories which oversimplify, but it would scarcely be possible to exaggerate the part which concern for the food supply has played in the history of religion. Even the Promised Land, which is still for so many Christians the symbol of that Paradise from which we are exiles, has always been painted in terms of food as a land flowing with milk and honey. Man in the early days was eager to eat his Eden. He was eager to eat his god. Food seemed to him a sort of insecure and divine miracle. If he had been born intelligent he would have realized that the world was so replete with food that there was no need to make such a fuss about them. But man was not born intelligent. He has not even yet grown intelligent. He is still in a sweat about his food as though there were not enough to go round, and each of us had to steal his portion at the expense of a neighbour. The air is winged with food; the sea and the rivers that fall into the sea pour it in shoals from sunrise to sunset and from pole to pole; the earth is coloured and clamorous with it. It is as if every landscape were loud with eatable things. The golden age of plenty has always been with us if we had but cared to live in it. One might parody Stevenson and say with truth that "the world is so full of eatable things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings." But we have preferred to doubt the exuberant earth and to malign her for a niggard. If we had any real reverence for the earth we would no more dream of acquiescing in private ownership of food than of acquiescing in private ownership of the air. True, our food has a thousand enemies in the ardour of the sun and plagues and tempests and rains, and Nature is not such a prodigal as to teach us to be fools. But it is seldom, at least in these climates, that she will refuse her children bread. If any man goes hungry it is less likely that Nature is at fault than that humanity

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has blundered. May one hope that the multiplication of good meals which has been brought about by the war will remain as a permanent social fact when the war is over? One hears it continually said that an army marches on its stomach. Is not this as true of a nation as of an army? It may be all very well to be careless of our own food, like Montaigne, who always ate the dish nearest to him, or Thoreau, who declared he could dine off a fried rat, but the virtue of carelessness about the food of others is less obvious. . . .

Perhaps the best thing that could happen to European society would be that we should all begin to imitate the soldiers, and confess our meals one to another, the rich to the poor, the landlord to the labourer, at casual meetings in the streets and on 'buses. One would like to see a duke pausing at the gates of Hyde Park to exchange accounts of the previous day's meals with a road-sweeper. Not that a duke is necessarily more greedy than a journalist. But, generally speaking, he is more symbolic of vast wealth and of a world in which neither tinned salmon nor tripe is regarded as a luxury. One would like, too, to see a bishop button-holing a docker and explaining to him with tears in his eyes how he had given up dessert as a war-time economy. Mutual confessions of this kind would surely make for a better understanding between (in the jingling phrase) the classes and the masses. . . . Ultimately they might even lead to the institution of one of the most necessary forms of human equality—equality (more or less) of dinners.

## ON TAKING A WALK IN LONDON

There was a Londoner who confessed the other day that he had taken to walking a part of the way to his office in the morning. He does not do it for pleasure, he said. He does not do it for economy. He does it from a feeling that at a time when so many human beings are engaged in physical combat one ought to keep one's body from falling below a certain level of fitness. He finds these morning walks, he declares, dull beyond words. He only manages to get through them by counting his steps as he walks. He finds interest in the discovery that the number of steps he takes to a mile does not vary beyond five or six from one day to another. He also enjoys marking the quarter-miles along the way by lamp-posts, pillar-boxes and other signs. Is London, then, such a desert to the senses as is implied by this? Other men have asserted that it is a second Bagdad, and that one has only to pass behind a wall to discover a painted and mysterious life surpassing the Arabian Nights. Certainly, in so populous a city, to which ships come from the islands at the bottom of the world, where men of curious colours dwell, it would be surprising if everything were prosaic. One can more easily believe that romance sits like a secret in every window, and that out of every door beauty and adventure may suddenly appear. There is not a stucco house in a stucco street but a door may open at any moment, and out may come a Chinaman, or an Irishman, or

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a Jewess. As one grows older one forgets that this is so, or becomes indifferent. But even a bald man has only to see the life of a street represented on a cinematograph to realize how interesting and unexpected it all is. If we were a higher race of beings, how excited we should be by the records of the life and vanities of these human animals passing in and out of their burrows! They are more amazing than ants. They are funnier than penguins. They look now like bears, now like eagles, now like sheep, now like serpents. They are all the animals in turn, except that they walk on two legs and have pink or brown or yellow skins. How can we pass the burrows, caves and nests of this oddest of the families of creatures and yet feel uninterested as if we were walking between blank walls? Or is there a genuine reason for our dullness? Is there something tedious about these human houses which we do not find in nests and the lairs of beasts? Perhaps there is. The eagle, we may be sure, builds his nest solely with a view to its excellence as a nest. The wasp hangs its house in the thorn-bush with no thought but of living happily in it. The coral insect—if it is an insect—I speak without prejudice—raises a structure more wonderful than the Pyramids above the surface of the sea without any notion of letting it out afterwards at a profit. It is not mere indulgence in the luxury of morality when one sees in this the reason why the houses of animals are so interesting and the houses of human beings so dull. If each of us built his own house, like Thoreau, or—for that is impossible—if they were built singlemindedly for the use and pleasure of those who have to live in them, our streets would become rich in individuality and significance. As it is, the taint of trade is upon them. They are built by men who desire to foist upon us a minimum of excellence for a maximum of profit. How could a decent house grow up in this spirit?

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How could beauty come out of so profane a door?  
How could mystery sit at so mean a window?

The truth is there are few streets or avenues in London which, so far as the houses are concerned, justify themselves as a walk on a fine summer morning. One has to turn from the houses themselves to the eccentricities of the human animals that scurry and crawl and glide along the pavements. One will not easily get tired in London so long as one is interested in observing the shapes of men and women and children. Here are seven millions of them, each as different from the other as two nations, most of them walking up and down streets, or up and down shops, or up and down stairs all their lives. One would imagine that it would require a city even to bury their dead bodies : one would imagine that seven million bodies could not be smuggled into the earth without raising a mountain on its surface. It is morbid, however, and, for all we know, false, to regard man too consistently as a doomed creature. His doom may be a mere incident—a mere sloughing of a skin—in the adventures of a god. As he walks the streets of London he is, to be sure, a god a little dilapidated, a god shambling, a god that has seen better days. He may be a god with a stiff neck or (as you may infer from the advertisements) a god with a bad leg. He may be a god with disasters in every passage in the labyrinth of his body—the passages of breath and blood and bile. But be he diseased or crippled, or be he hidden under a silk hat, the seer will discover him and announce the glory of his origin and his end. The seer may, of course, be a liar, but he has at least discovered a means of bringing space and brightness into the streets. He sees even grocers as slim-cheeked caricatures of divinity—grocers who try to make you buy Danish butter instead of the butter you want on the ground that “the Danes, you know, are per-

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fectly loyal to us, sir," or apologize for not serving you with a Dutch cheese on the plea that "trade with Holland has fallen off during the war. The Dutch, I fear, madam, favour the other side." No street that contains a grocer's shop is entirely dull. If you find it so, go in and see the grocer—that starveling Zeus in shirt-sleeves who commands the map of the world for the materials on which he makes his penny profits. Tea from China and Ceylon, dates from Persia, olives from Italy, coffee from Arabia, oranges from Spain, nuts from Brazil, oil from Mexico, sago from Borneo, rice from Java, pine-apples from Australia, fish (in tins) from the seven seas, nutmegs and pepper from blue-robed islands, almost everything in his shop a seafarer—one has only to look into the man's window to travel. He does not, it may be, display the profuse colours of foreign countries to us as the fruiterer does. He does not communicate the glory of the earth, but rather he has tinned and bottled and spiced and weighed and papered it as, to say truth, he would pack up the Milky Way itself in blue and brown bags if it were saleable. But none the less he is tied to romance as by a string. He mixes romance with his prose as when he magnificently describes himself as an Italian warehouseman.

But there are streets in London into which not even the grocers' shops bring any brightness. There are streets so dismal that they could scarcely be more so if every house-front were hung with crape. Malodorous, unswept, grey, they are haunts of butchers' flies, they reek with the smell of fried fish and green peas, their windows are all sweat and dust, the confectioners sell picture-postcards of squeezing couples, the newsagents sell snuff and tobacco, a shave costs three-halfpence, old clothes dangle on cords outside the second-hand clothes shops and defeat the fried fish with a worse smell.

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They would be like streets of the dead if the placard of a Northcliffe paper did not at intervals proclaim panic outside a newsagent's shop in purple and scarlet letters. Who would willingly go walking in such a sty? It is no wonder that man has fled underground from such sights and smells in his daily travels. London, taken as a whole, is a city of mean streets. That humanity with its heroism and its cheerful laughter has survived existence in these rows of hired stalls suggests that the seer who spies a god in man is nearer the truth than the pessimist who spies an insect. Perhaps it is a sort of genteel cowardice, but, in spite of this, there are many of us who would rather our children had never been born than that they should be born into such surroundings. . . .

But I had intended to speak of the pleasures of walking in London, of the constant sense of discovery as one passes the doors, of the constant speculation on one thing and another. London bubbles with sights. There is entertainment even in the sight of a sweep's broom over a shop with the announcement that the proprietor combines the professions of chimney-sweep and carpet-beater. It seems absurd for some reason or other that a sweep should beat carpets. One comes again on a sign in a shabby street, "Ostrich feathers cleaned, French and English style," and one is pleased to have added to one's list of queer trades. Nor does one ever cease to be fascinated by the sight of those glass cases full of false teeth which are displayed outside the doorways of cheap dentists. They are horrible, they are ugly, they are worse than butchers' shops. But there is a kind of mockery in them, as in skeletons, which pleases us. They are a jeer at the beauty of man. And when we see beneath them the notice, "Old false teeth bought," we get a shudder of repulsion such as we never got from Baudelaire. Who

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is it that sells old false teeth? Where do they come from? From the mouth of a dead man? Who wears them afterwards? This is speculation among horrors. . . .

Perhaps, if you want to feel comfortable, you had better take no walks in London except in the parks and squares and down Piccadilly and along the river. In the daytime at any rate. At night it is different. Night turns London from a collection of suburbs into a stage, and one passes into a world of wonderful and fleeting figures which seem capable of love and murder and beauty and everything except what is commonplace. This is especially so since the lights were lowered owing to the war. Lamps that used to gleam like great flares now peep like dying candles high above the Tartarean streets. One imagines that a city lit by glow-worms would be less pitch-black than this. The low lighting has had at least the fortunate effect of enabling us to see the buildings and streets in mass instead of in detail; they loom out of the night with an unexpected majesty. To walk in London at night in these times cannot be so much less wonderful than to have walked among the temples of Athens by starlight. It is by many people, indeed, being revelled in as a luxury. . . . That is why the lights must be turned on again, full blaze, as soon as the war is over. We must never be allowed to enjoy walking in London till London has been made fit to walk in. And that will not be till it is as fit to live in as, in their own kinds, an ant-hill or a bird's nest.

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At the last door on the left my papers were taken from me, and I was told to sit down and wait. There was a flat wooden form outside the door. Down the middle of the hall other long seats had been laid back to back, and a hundred or more weary-looking men sat on them, some of them talking to each other, some of them silently gazing into space or shifting their thin legs on the uncomfortable seats. They had, all of them, I think, been medically rejected at a previous examination. Some of them certainly did not look the part—at least, not in their clothes. But most of them had the wasted appearance, so common in London, of half-sucked pear-drops. Among them a little hunchback sat, dangling his feet solitarily; another man sat at the far side of the hall, a well-dressed man, his shoulders and head twitching beyond control. On the whole, they were a lean and depressed company. A lean man in a bowler-hat and glasses, who sat beside me, told me that he had just recovered from pleuro-pneumonia. The sun came swelteringly in on us through the glass roof where the awning had fallen to pieces and hung down ragged and dirty. Everywhere one had a vision of melting brows, of veins swelling on temples, of veins swelling on hands. One turned one's eyes from the men to the walls and read an endless number of ugly yellow posters giving particulars about separation allowances for soldiers' wives and blazoning forth mottoes such as: "You are helping the Germans if you use a motor-car for pleasure." One waited for something to happen, but for a long time nothing happened. Occasionally a soldier or an

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old wrinkled clerk would come out of a door with a paper in his hand and walk leisurely to another door. He would be watched on his passage as by Argus. He would disappear and leave us in dullness. He would reappear and a crowd of eyes would once more follow him from door to door. Sometimes a fat, bright-eyed young Jew, with a smile that never changed either to spread or diminish, would stop one of these people in order to make sure that his case had not been missed. . . .

One hoped it would be all over by lunch-time. The dapper man, tall as a tree and thin as a skeleton, who had brought the *Times* with him and was working through it column by column, would soon have reached the last page. At length a soldier with a big stomach came out of a room with an armful of papers and began calling out names. People rose from all sides and gathered round him like hens hurrying to a meal. He shouted them back to their seats and ordered that none but those he named should approach him. Then he called out another name. "Here!" answered a voice sharp as a rifle-shot. The soldier paused and looked at the little man running up to him. "You've been in the Army before," he said. "Yes, sergeant," the little man admitted. "I knew it," said the sergeant; "no place like the Army for learning manners." He then began to march down the hall roaring names, as it were, out of the back of his head, like a railway-porter shouting out a list of stations. He was followed by a draggle of men anxiously listening in the hope of recognising their own names amid the inarticulate bellowing. Another soldier began to call out other names at the far end of the hall. After each list was ended, the men who had not been mentioned sat back and shook their heads at each other with resigned smiles. An official passing by stooped down and commented: "It's a bloody farce. They'll

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examine a hundred men and not get ten. You'll see."

For a farce, I confess, I found it dull. I thought that cattle penned up closely at a fair and left unsold till the end of a hot day must feel very much as we did. In the end the soldier with the big stomach came out and told us that we shouldn't be examined before lunch now, and that we might go away for three-quarters of an hour and have something to eat. I went into the street and bought a *Star* to see what had happened in the outside world. I felt that a great battle might easily have been won while I was waiting on the hard bench outside the wooden room in the hall of the White City. I saw a Lyons tea-shop and suggested to the man who had had pneumonia that we might go and have some coffee. "I have never been in a Lyons's shop," he said hesitatingly, "what is it like?" I did not know that such innocence existed in London. "I always prefer a cook-shop myself," he said, with a sad look up and down, and he walked across the road to a public-house.

When I got back to the White City I ran into another man who had also had pneumonia. He drew a little square figure in the air with his forefinger and told me that there was a patch of that size missing from his right lung. I sat down on a bench beside him. "Do you mind if I smoke an asthma cigarette?" he said, as though it were a jest, and lit one. We had hardly begun to talk when a man with heart-disease came up—a tall, pallid young man, very straight in the back, with a man-of-the-world smile and a man-of-the-world cigarette. He said that he had just been examined and had been ordered to undergo a special examination at a heart hospital. "I regard that as a distinctly hopeful sign," he said. Soldiers and clerks continued to walk at intervals from door to door, and occasionally one of the soldiers would march off

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with a brood of invalids to the dressing-room. The rest of us said, "Hard luck!" and waited prostrate with the heat for the next roll-call. A man at the far end of the hall opened a lemonade stall. I took Scott's *Lives of the Novelists* out of my pocket and tried to read it. In five minutes I put it back again, yawning. I continued to yawn for three solid hours —hours as solid and heavy as lead. I had arrived at eleven in the morning. It was half-past four before I heard my name called, and was taken with a number of other men into a wooden hutch and told to undress. Clothes were lying all about as in a bathing-box. Some men were struggling into their trousers; others were clambering out of them. One little man who had just been examined was the skinniest human being I ever saw. He had not enough flesh on his bones to make a decent-sized chicken. He was as bald as a block of ice save for a fringe of grey hairs on each side of his skull, and altogether he looked in his glasses like a little wizened creature of seventy. Other men were to be seen wearing belts, bands and trusses round various parts of their bodies. One felt at times as though one must be at a holy well among people who were awaiting miraculous cures rather than among young men in the prime of life about to be chosen as warriors in a great war. Horace Walpole once declared, on an occasion when every invalid and cripple in the House of Commons had been whipped up to vote against John Wilkes, that the floor of the House looked like nothing so much as the Pool of Bethesda. Here was London's Pool of Bethesda, with the sick and the maimed cursing the whole business indignantly under their breath. Through a doorway one had a view of the examination-room, which was full of naked men, with doctors listening at their chests or making them dance before them with strange gestures. We were permitted to wear our jackets

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as a part-covering till the actual examination should begin. Suddenly the half-naked man beside me, an attractive-looking youth with delicately curved nose and a wing of gravel-coloured hair, closed his eyes and drooped his head like a dying chicken. He began to gasp, and his head swayed backwards and forwards over his chest like a ship plunging in a heavy sea. I wondered if he was about to have a fit or was dying. I saw myself skipping forth, a pard-like spirit beautiful and swift, in my little short jacket and with my long hairy legs, to summon the assistance of the doctors in the next room. "Are you feeling ill?" I inquired. "No, no," he answered, opening his eyes wearily; "it's only asthma. Haven't you ever seen it before?" Other men tripped back from being examined: some of them with patient, contemptuous smiles; others flushed with indignation and sprinkling the already foul air with "bloodies," all of them rather like undergraduates exchanging experiences after an "oral." I watched a bearded doctor in his shirt-sleeves through the doorway, as he popped his stethoscope over a chest that seemed to me to be the chest of an athlete.

The examination-room itself was a long wooden room, with a row of tables littered with books of official forms and papers, and with clerks writing slowly at them as though each separate letter were a work of national importance. The room was divided into sections by red screens. In every section a man stood in his skin while a doctor examined his teeth or palpated his chest or jiggled him in the groin, calling out such things as "varicocele left" to the clerks, who solemnly wrote it all down. The doctors, I must say, were a good-humoured lot. If one was disgusted, it was when one's eye travelled round the room and fell on a back with a large sore patch running across the small of it, or on a bucket of dirty slops with

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matches and cigarette-ends floating in it near a man who was being tested for Bright's disease. I confess I could not help laughing as some long string of misery was ordered to prance on the floor, the doctor bidding him, "Now swing your arms—now rise on your toes—now hop." It was as though a company of Spanish beggars had suddenly reverted to the conditions of the Garden of Eden and had then been bitten by the tarantula. How indignantly some of them danced! "You say you have a discharge from the right ear?" the doctor would say. Then he would turn to one of the clerks and repeat to him: "Discharge from the right ear." "Now cough," he would add, seizing the recruit by the crutch. Once more, as I looked round, I thought of the men who had been called up as cattle at a fair and of the doctors as butchers and farmers going the rounds and prodding the beasts with sticks, sizing up their value as flesh.

My own turn came. A little doctor with a gentle light on his face like a Christian's and a stethoscope hanging round his neck like a scapulary called me over. I had to write my name once or twice. He asked me gently about my health. I ran down a list of diseases, curable and incurable, with which various doctors had strewed my path, dogmatically contradicting one another. One of them, alas! was written on me like a crooked note of exclamation. The doctor examined my heart, my pulse, my tongue. He made me do gymnastics for him. He looked down my throat and said, "Pharyngitis." As the clerk seemed to hesitate, he began to spell it: "P—h—a—r—y—." He covered my right eye with a piece of cardboard and made me read P B N T from a card hanging on the wall. He covered my left eye and made me read O S Q D F. "Sight 66," he said to the clerk. He weighed me, he took my height, he measured my chest when it was full and

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when it was empty. He asked me if I had ever had rheumatic fever or a pain in my ears. He then bade me wait while a deaf man was being examined and, after him, a healthy-looking man who kept putting a queer instrument up his nose.

I then had to go to another table where a sturdy, cheerful doctor in khaki was sitting—a whitening-haired man in gold-rimmed glasses with a gift for making diseased and naked persons smile as they passed under his inquisition. His eyebrows rose as he looked at my figure. "How did you come to get like that?" he asked in amazement. I told him that it was the result of an idle and misspent youth. "Are you an Irishman?" was his next question. I admitted it. "Thy speech bewrayeth thee," he said. He then examined my heart, and showed me so much considerateness that I thought it must be very seriously affected indeed. . .

Back at last to the dressing-room, where men were asking each other, "Did they pass you?" and blaspheming. A long, black, consumptive Scotsman was saying: "It's a bloody disgrace to call up a man wi' lungs at all." Attendants began to wash down the hall with a hose, and the water crept in along the floor of the dressing-room. We were taken across the hall to another room and told to sign our names in a book in order that we might be given 2s. 9d. I signed, but forgot the 2s. 9d. A Scottish soldier ran after me with it. "What do you mean by leaving your money behind you?" he asked warmly. We were then taken to yet another room and left at the door, while two aged men crouched over a table within and wrote out rejection certificates. At the end of half an hour or so my turn to go in came. One of the clerks wrote out my certificate, and another wrote the same details in a book. It was apparently to be a certificate of identity as well as of rejection. "Complexion—fresh," they

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wrote down. "Eyes—what colour are your eyes?" They asked me had I any scars or marks on my body. I told them no, nothing but a mole or two. "Moles will do," they said, "where are they?" I said that I really wasn't quite sure. I was almost certain there was one on my right side, and I thought —though I wouldn't swear it—there was one on my left. They nodded as though to say that was enough, and wrote down on my card, "Moles on right and left flanks."

I had been at the White City since the morning. When at last I escaped into the street it was close upon half-past six. I felt that the certificate did not exaggerate in describing me as "permanently and totally disabled."

I suddenly remembered the two-and-ninepence. I hailed a taxi and got into it, moles and all.

## ON BEING A WORKING MAN

Those who were most bitter against Mr. Lloyd George when he preached at dukes and landlords are applauding him most loudly now that he has taken to preaching at working men. It is a common belief that the working man exists to be preached at, and the more the better. He is the anvil upon which the hammer of rulers and masters needs to be brought down at regular intervals with a noise. He is the bottom dog, the black sheep, everything that requires the strong hand. Like the black man in Mr. Kipling's poem, he is half devil and half child. He may be flattered so long as flattery will keep him contented in his place; but when flattery proves unavailing, he must be brought to heel with stern words, and, if necessary, with sterner deeds. Canute saw that those who urged him to utter his prohibition, "Thus far and no farther," to the incoming sea were (in a phrase leader-writers love) knaves and fools; but the Canutes of these days are more self-confident as they bid the tide of labour keep its distance and not encroach too far on the fortunate shore of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The truth is, many people in the upper and middle classes cannot cease regarding working people as members of a subject race. They believe that working men are doing their duty only when they are keeping quiet. They hire an exceeding great number of mouths and pens to preach to the workers the doctrine of non-resistance. Every time the workers resort even to passive resistance, it is not long till they are painted as wickeder than the Huns on the strength of some isolated street incident. They are

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denounced as disloyal and by every other epithet that can suggest that they are enemies of the State. Luther told the German peasants when they rose in rebellion: "They ought to suffer and be silent, if they want to be Christians." That is a widely held ideal of conduct for the working classes. It is not preached by people who are Tolstoyans; it is preached by men who hold that there is one morality for those who rule, and another for those who serve. That, I think, must be one of the trials of an intelligent workingman's life. He is continually treated as though he were a different kind of creature from men who own land and money and shops.

It is, I admit, as easy to sentimentalise over the working man as to abuse him. It is easy to see him as a figure of tragic simplicity, something painted by Millet or sculptured by Rodin, symbolizing not merely the dignity but the divinity of labour. He is in this view Atlas with the world on his shoulders. He is the builder of cities, the harvester of vineyards, the discoverer of bread. He towers above us like a moral lesson rather than a man. He holds in his hands all gifts, and statesmen and admirals and millionaires are his pensioners. He seems perfection incarnate in his strength and endurance. He has the air of a messenger from Heaven rather than of the greasy outcast of the public-houses painted by his enemies. This may be as false a view as the other, but it is at least an invention ominous of a more cheerful world, not a mere caricature scrawled by hate. It emphasises the fact that the working man is, above all, a sufferer; he suffers in order that others may have abundance. It may be argued that he does not really suffer so acutely as those for whom he suffers—that his imagination is dull and his sensibilities blunted. But is not this the supreme suffering of all, this loss of the power to suffer? Who would exchange imagination for dullness—

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sensitiveness of body and soul for insensibility? To do so is to commit suicide; it is to prefer to suffer death rather than to suffer life. But as a matter of fact the theory of the insensibility of the working classes is so much nonsense. It may be that the average working man is curiously insensitive before the beauty of some blue-hooded Madonna of Titian's; but then so is the average peer and so is the average manufacturer. It may be that use and necessity have made him comparatively insensitive to the ugliness of stale clothes and smelly bedrooms and two-year-old whiskey. But he is sensitive like the rest of us to cold and heat, to the difference between a full belly and an empty one, to pain and pleasure, to love and anger and hatred, to the difference between living in a smaller room and living in a larger one, between being bullied and being treated like a reasonable creature, between a halfpenny and a sovereign, between living in a pig-sty of children and living in a clean and smiling home, between a day at Brighton and a day on the operation table, between looking forward to a pension and looking forward to the workhouse, between getting ill and getting well, between living and dying. Assuredly, we must not get into the habit of regarding the working man as a person who may be knocked about, stuck with pins, exposed to the elements, and generally neglected without injury, like certain ugly-eyed dolls that children love.

Those who regard the working man as a different kind of being from themselves, however, seem to think that the only way in which one can do him serious damage is by allowing him to become better off than he is at present. This attitude to the working classes was clearly demonstrated the other day in the West London police-court when the magistrate, Mr. Fordham, lectured a soldier's wife

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who was accused of disorderly conduct. I have no doubt from the evidence that the woman deserved a lecture, but Mr. Fordham's lecture was exactly the kind that ought not to have been delivered. "You are," he told the unhappy woman, "getting much too large an allowance—an allowance which really in itself drives you to drink and to squander money. Probably if you had less money by way of allowance, you would keep much more sober." If Mr. Fordham regards it as his mission to preach gospel poverty to mankind in general, his lecture is in a measure justifiable. But if he does not, by what right does he address his condescending middle-class moralisings to the poor instead of to peeresses and the wives and daughters of millionaires? Does he find in the world about him that it is money which drives people to drink? Would he recommend a young lady in his own class to refuse an inheritance on the ground that it would bring with it temptations to drunkenness? Does he find that the more one's salary increases the more one feels like squandering it on alcohol? He knows that it is not so. Riches are no charm against drunkenness; but it is not excess of money, but excess of poverty, that in general drives men and women to excess of drinking. It is in the slums, not in the Bishop's palace or in the country house or in the villa, that drunkenness is most usual in these days. Mr. Fordham's lecture is not based on facts but is merely an expression of the middle-class suspicion of improvements in the position of working people. Working men are not admitted to have the right to improve their position except by thrift. Do they ask for more money? They are denounced on the ground that, if they got it, they would only drink it. Do they ask for more leisure? They are denounced because, if they got it, they would spend it in the public-houses. Do they ask for more power? They are denounced for

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plotting death, disaster, and damnation against the State. In a State which glories in competition they are forbidden to compete except against each other; if they enter into the larger competition for the country's wealth, they are accused of tyranny, red ruin, and the breaking up of laws. They are the bad boys of the family, whom it is always safe to blame. Whenever any dispute arises between them and their employers, they are almost invariably regarded as the aggressors. The employer who insists that war shall be the occasion of lower real wages and larger profits is looked on as a sensible business man. The worker who demands that during war-time his children's stomachs shall be filled at least as usual is browbeaten as a fellow who is disturbing national unity and interfering with the supply of necessary things to his brothers in the trenches. The employer who strikes against giving his men an honest wage is never painted in half so dark colours. And yet it is his refusal to pay a fair wage that has again and again in recent months held up the work of the war.

Not that the working man is a saint who never errs. But consider his position. He has no security in his work beyond the week—frequently not beyond the day. He lives at the whim of the employing classes. He lives as it were at a week's notice. He sees his children growing up about him, and he knows that an accident may happen to him any day as the result of which they will be left to the harsh charity of the parish. He sees them growing up with the gutter for their only garden, and he speculates on the future of all that brightness and laughter and its insecure tenure even of the gutter. He sees them doomed to live almost for certain in the same flowerless monotony in which he himself has always lived. When they come into the house, he is like a man fighting for air. They are all fighting for air. They are overcrowded; they cannot get away from

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each other; they get on each other's nerves. Hence the furies of mean streets, the outbreaks of violence and drunkenness. He attempts to bring some of the beauty of the world into his home; he has a caged bird, a cat, a pot of geraniums. He has one or two meanly showy glass ornaments on the mantelpiece, such as he might win on a Bank holiday. Not that his house is always as poor as this. People tell you that the Yorkshire miner has often a piano in his house; they tell you this with a smile, as much as to say that a working man has really no right to have a piano in his house. But his house is almost always ugly. He is dumped, as it were, into a brickfield; he has no inheritance in the teeming earth. Wherever he goes it is the same. He is herded into cheap galleries in the theatres: he is pushed into separate bars in the public-houses. He is a person cut off, put in his place. He is an outsider, and his children are outsiders, in a world of motor-cars and rich dresses and gardens. He eats what the more fastidious classes leave. He bets on horses that rich men run. He, too, is caged-off, like his bird. . . . And yet, paradoxically enough, he is cheerful rather than bitter, and he faces death for his country in great battles with music-hall jokes on his lips. He enjoys the sight of kings and members of Parliament. He enjoys eating and drinking and making love and playing with his children. At least it is so in a thousand thousand cases. He has reconciled himself to the little circle of his lot, and does not look for pleasure beyond its circumference. . . .

Luckily, every now and then he becomes more inquisitive and adventurous, and the circle is made wider. He is then attacked on all sides as a trespasser, but he is really a far sounder patriot than those who by withholding him trespass upon the rights of the coming race.

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Those who are happiest over the change in the Government are happy chiefly for two reasons. One is that they have got new lawyers for old. The other is that there has been an influx of business-men into the new Ministry. For some years past there has been a growing inclination to paint the business-man in bright colours. He seems to stand for everything that is practical in contrast to the mess, muddle and make-believe which are supposed to be the attendant circumstances of the labours of most of the politicians.

When people talk of the business-man in politics, they often give one the impression that they regard all business-men as being of one type. It is as though they believed there was no difference between a cotton-manufacturer and an advertising-manager, or between an advertising-manager and a shop-keeper. They have an idea, apparently, that to make money in any branch of manufacture, commerce or trade, is the mark of an all-round practical man. Kings and landowners and clergymen, lawyers and artists and men of science are, by comparison, inhabitants of the moon. Now it can hardly be doubted that the heads of great businesses like Lord Rhondda and Sir Alfred Mond may perform immense services to the State—services as immense as those performed by landowners and lawyers. But this does not mean that the ordinary man who is called a business-man has the right to regard the genius for organization possessed by a Lord Rhondda or a Sir Alfred Mond as a specific and common faculty of the business world. A business-man

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either may be a great producer or he may be—I use the word in no disparaging sense—a great “tout.” He may reveal a gift for increasing the productive capacity of his firm or he may merely reveal a gift for increasing orders for the goods of his firm. In other words, his talent may be either the talent of organization or the talent of persuasion. In the latter case he may be worth a small fortune to a firm of manufactures competing with other firms, but he may not be worth as much as an ordinary civil servant in the work of government. Persuasion is, no doubt, an art required in politics and the civil service as well as in business. But the plausibility of the business-man is, I believe, crude and ineffective compared to the plausibility of lawyers and University graduates.

As for those leaders of industry who do possess the genius for organization, even they have seldom the added genius for statesmanship. In these days, when there is so much talk of national organization, many people seem to regard statesmanship as a problem in business organization and nothing more. This is a mere confusion of terms. The State is a household as well as a business, and, just as a man who may be able to organize his business into prosperity may be able to organize his household into nothing but gloom, so there might conceivably be a man who could organize a business into success but could only organize a nation into disaster. The problems of statesmanship call for qualities of mind and (not in the mawkish sense) sympathy such as the ordinary business-man has, in his favourite phrase, “no use for.” The statesman is not permitted to shape events towards the single end of making profit for himself and a number of shareholders within the four corners of the law. He is required to be as disinterested in his leadership as the business-man is bound by force of circumstance

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to be "interested." He may be, up to a point—and quite a considerable point—ambitious and fond of his salary, but his service of the State does not involve profiteering as does the business magnate's service of his firm. The business magnate is the head of a nation within a nation, and his loyalty is, though not necessarily to a dangerous extent, divided. He is impatient of laws which restrict his liberty to do as he likes in his sub-nation. He sought as bitterly as the Stuarts in order to establish his divine right to absolute power. The nineteenth century was spent in limiting the powers of business-men as the seventeenth was spent in limiting the powers of kings. The business-men were indignant when it was suggested that the workers had a right to organize themselves into unions in order to obtain better conditions of labour. They were amazed when they were denied the right to make use of the services of as many children as could be tempted—it was usually the parents rather than the children who were tempted—into their factories by a tiny wage. Many of them were genuinely shocked when the proper sanitation of their factories was declared to be a matter not of private but of public interest. Not that there have not always been men of high ideals in business. But the average business point of view has, as a rule, been selfish and anti-social. Its gospel has been a gospel of gain, not of the increase of human culture and human happiness. There is probably a greater proportion of business-men to-day whose ideals rise above this penny wisdom than there has ever been in history, but the organization of gain is still with the bulk of them the golden rule of life. There is fortunately only one great business in England which has frankly taken for its motto, "Our trade our politics," but the interference of the business-man in politics for private ends is not unknown in other trades also.

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And the experience of some other countries in this respect has been much worse. It may be retorted that the landowners have gone in for the politics of their property quite as much as the business-men, and it cannot be denied that every class is inclined to legislate for itself under the pretence that to legislate for so admirable a class is to legislate for the nation. That, indeed, is one of the temptations of human nature which is well-nigh irresistible. If there were any danger of the public making a fetish of government by landowners, one would at once emphasise the dangers involved in such a system. But, as it is government by business-men which happens just now to be in the air, one is forced to consider the qualifications of the business-man for such work.

The business-man of the better sort would, I think, be among the first to admit the shortcomings of business-men as a class. He would admit that, outside their ordinary sphere, many of the ablest of them are extremely ignorant men—men of grotesquely narrow vision. The land-owning classes have at least been brought up in the tradition that they are the governing classes, and, though from the point of view of a Matthew Arnold they may be "barbarians," they at least breathe to some extent the atmosphere of the large world. They include a considerable proportion of men the interest of whose lives is problems of government, problems of foreign affairs, problems of this or that sort of national service. I have no wish to see government by the aristocratic classes revived as a political ideal, but, badly as they have governed the world in the past, it is only fair to credit them with having produced a great number of men of what is called public spirit. This tradition of public spirit has been strong especially in politics, diplomacy, armies and navies. Though it has again and again been tempered

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by the desire to find jobs for relations, and has been accompanied by a narrow view of the welfare of the State, it has seldom been quite extinguished by the spirit of profiteering. The record of the business-men who have so far entered politics is also creditable enough, but there is no doubt that the obsession of profiteering is stronger in business-men as a class than in other classes. It may be thought that, this being so, the introduction of the business-man into government will mean that he will begin to make profits for the State instead of making profits for a firm. There is an idea abroad that the efficiency of business-houses is vastly superior to the efficiency of Government departments. This is open to question. For one thing, the profit aimed at in public departments is very different from the profit of dividends. It is, or should be, the profit of the citizens, not the immediate profits of pockets. Public bodies are concerned with providing citizens with good schools and roads and bridges, rather than with schools, roads and bridges that, in the business-man's use of the word, "pay." Every public department should, admittedly, be run on business-like lines—but not for business ends. Hence it is difficult to compare the efficiency of a public department with that of a business firm.

No outsider gets to know, for instance, of the blunders of a business firm until it is threatened with bankruptcy. Yet an honest business-man will confess that he is as liable to make mistakes as any Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary who ever lived. The business-man does not live in the glare of newspaper criticism. So long as dividends remain high, he is immune from criticism. No statesman—not even the greatest in history—ever enjoyed such immunity. His very successes are frequently assailed by his enemies as failures. He is pronounced a fool even before he has been given a chance. The

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business-man, being permitted to make his ordinary day-to-day blunders in secret, preserves his reputation as an infallible and practical man. I remember hearing the head of a great firm saying, at a time when Lord Salisbury was Prime Minister, that if the things that happened in his office were subjected to the same censorious scrutiny as the things that happen in Cabinets and Government departments, the general public would conclude that his business was doomed to failure. He still "carries on," however.

In spite of all that can be said in criticism of the business-man, his presence in politics should be no less welcome than that of the landlord, the lawyer, the economist, and the working-man. One protests only against his canonization as a national redeemer. Political ideals and business ideals are not necessarily identical, but for business methods there is always need. At the same time, it is the statesmen rather than the business-men who have made such a success (from one point of view) of national organization in Germany. The business-man has helped, but the inspiring ideas were the ideas of politicians. After all, the business of government is the most difficult business in the world, and there is no reason to think that an ordinary business-man would succeed in it any more than he would succeed in the business of painting a picture or writing a play.

## HORRORS OF WAR

At regular intervals during a great war the question arises as to how much the general public should be told about its horrors. The question has been raised with reference to the cinematograph pictures of the Battle of the Somme. One may put aside at the outset the objection that the cinematograph cheapens great events, which it records, as it were, by accident and as a privileged spy. That is not the point at issue. The argument against exhibiting to the public the horrors of war is usually based on the feeling that to dwell upon such things is to lacerate unnecessarily the hearts of those whose near relations either are facing death or have already fallen in the field. And there is a selfish as well as a generous instinct which urges people to keep silent about the horrors of war. Those who stay at home, or many of them, like to wrap themselves up in a delusion that in making war they are sending forth men upon a romance. In reading about the war, they hug every comic anecdote and Academy prettiness to their breasts as though these things restored their confidence in the world. War, they seem to be telling themselves, would not be so bad if it were not for German atrocities. I imagine, however, the proportion of people who take this comfortable view is smaller, immensely smaller, than it has ever been before. It is difficult to believe that by this time there is a single person in the civilized world who has not a friend or two fighting. Every day hundreds of new houses go into mourning. One can scarcely find a street in which some house has not lost its heir through a bursting shell or a sniper's

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bullet. One looks at the windows of the poor, and one sees an increasing number of the bemedalled cards which a few months ago were stuck there with such pride now fitted with a mourning bow. Thus, in order to escape the realities of war, one would need to be a hermit, or at least to live in the cell of one's own selfishness.

Why, then, it may be asked, add the realization of horrors to the already overwhelming realization of personal loss? And obviously one would not go to a woman who had lost her son and describe to her in detail his wounds, and the agonies in which he died. One would like her to remain, almost at any cost, under the impression that he was one of the multitude who met their deaths swiftly and mercifully in the insane ecstasy of a charge. Supposing he died horribly, one would not for the world add his pain to hers. But this does not apply to the general realization of horrors. The civilian world has no right to benefit by the sufferings of others which it is not willing to face in their innumerable tragedy. No man has the right, by the proxy of a roomful of statesmen, to send men to death and suffering for his ideals without knowing exactly what he is doing. If men could persuade themselves that war was simply a "great game," they would be at war most of the time they could afford from the business of earning a living. It is a growing realization of the appallingness of war that has made civilized nations more and more come to regard it not as the first resort, but as the last resort in a dispute between rational beings. It was a revival of the war-cult of earlier ages that precipitated Germany into the present war. The German people as a whole, I imagine, could have been led still more enthusiastically into peace than into war. But their military leaders longed to use their beautiful regiments and their beautiful guns. They felt the passion of the game—

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the desire to live the "lordliest life" at its fullest and most thrilling. The fact that a number of powerful men regarded war as something other than a last resort has turned Europe into one vast house of lunacy and slaughter. And yet the realistic as opposed to the romantic view of war was common enough in recent years in Germany itself. One remembers a book called *The Slaughterhouse*, which was published in Germany a few years ago with the object of portraying war as a disgusting and frenzied butchery. Books of this kind, indeed, were fairly common in all countries. There was a Swede who wrote a remarkable volume of stories called *Pride of War*, in which he drew a horrid picture of events in the Italian War in Tripoli. One of his stories pictured a bayonet-charge in all its blood-lust and drunken fury and hideous messiness, and then suddenly showed us the soldiers who had taken part in it studying with appreciative acceptance the drawings in the illustrated papers which represented the charge as a romantic rush of soldiers in spotless uniforms to the glories of victory. One wonders how many soldiers could endure a Christmas-supplement treatment of the present war. So great is the human need for illusion that, no doubt, there are scores of thousands. But there are hundreds of thousands whom such make-believe caricatures would inflame with indignation. They know, and they will not forget. At the same time, many of the most popular books about the war are so reticent as regards horrors that the civilian is in danger of feeling almost too comfortable. One does not grudge him his comfort—frequently one shares it—but obviously the more he can be horrified into giving his attention to the necessity of discovering some saner means than war for arranging international disputes, the better. The world must not be allowed to drift into the slaughterhouse again, if any way of

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preventing it can be discovered. Whether war will ever absolutely cease on this planet, no one knows. But at least we can reduce its possibilities to a minimum by merely willing to do so, and by directing the intelligence of the world to that end. Some authors call this direction of will and intelligence the "cultivation of the international mind." There could be no better education of this mind than the realization of what war is actually like—how it far surpasses in horror a state of the world in which a *Titanic* or a *Lusitania* would go down in disaster on every day in the year. Some people may be alarmed lest a too acute realization of horrors may weaken the will to go on with a necessary war. But as a matter of fact this is not the effect of the realization of horrors on those who enter upon war as the only method available to them of defending a just cause. There will always be something in the human race which will be willing to face death and the intensest horrors if there is no other road to the victory of their ideal. The realization of horrors by the way will not enfeeble the spirit of men advancing towards great ends. Those ends must be reached—so they will hold—whatever the suffering. But is there no other road?

Hitherto, those who have dwelt upon the horrors of war have often been ready to adopt a policy of peace at any price. There is something ignoble in a nature which avoids war merely in order to escape the horrors of war. St. George might as honourably have run away from the dragon through hatred of its hideousness. What is needed is not a world in which men will run away from dragons, but a world in which men will see that dragons are not the indispensable arbiters in every human dispute. We need the will to exterminate the dragon, not to bolt from him. Sydney Smith, who was one of the most outspoken haters of war in nineteenth-century

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England, holds our sympathy so long as he protests against the appeal to this bloody judge in human affairs, when a more rational judge might be had; but he is in conflict with much that is fine in human nature when he denounces the chivalrous side of war with the criminal. There was nothing to appeal to the imagination of ardent men when in 1823 he wrote tremblingly of the prospect that England would enter upon a war for the sake of the liberties of Spain. "I am afraid," he wrote:—

"I am afraid we shall go to war; I am sorry for it. I see every day in the world a thousand acts of oppression which I should like to resent, but I cannot afford to play the Quixote. Why are the English to be the sole vindicators of the human race?"

And he wrote again on the same subject:—

"For God's sake, do not drag me into another war! I am worn down, and worn out, with crusading and defending Europe, and protecting mankind; I *must* think a little of myself. I am sorry for the Spaniards—I am sorry for the Greeks—I deplore the fate of the Jews; the people of the Sandwich Islands are groaning under the most detestable tyranny; Bagdad is oppressed—I do not like the present state of the Delta—Thibet is not comfortable. Am I to fight for all these people? The world is bursting with sin and sorrow. Am I to be champion of the Decalogue, and to be eternally raising fleets and armies to make all men good and happy? We have just done saving Europe, and I am afraid the consequence will be, that we shall cut each other's throats."

All this seems to be the most unaspiring of common

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sense to the Quixote that survives in every man's bosom. It is simply a bourgeois cry for comfortable things. One knows how humane a man Sydney Smith in fact was, but he has not expressed his anti-militarism here as a fine humane ideal. He missed all the heroic side of war when he accused mankind of "hailing official murderers, in scarlet, gold and cocks' feathers, as the greatest and most glorious of human creatures." He who cannot praise the heroism of war has no right to denounce the horrors of war. Mr. Masefield's picture of the horrors of war in his new book, *Gallipoli*, is all the more convincing because of the imaginative enthusiasm with which he reveals the hero in man triumphing amid the horrors. His soldier is a heroic challenger of all the fiends as well as a tragic figure who sees the comrades at his side

"blown to pieces . . . or dismembered, or drowned, or driven mad, or stalked, or sniped by some unseen stalker, or bombed in the dark sap with a handful of dynamite in a beef-tin, till their blood is caked upon his clothes and thick upon his face,"

and who himself in a few minutes more may be

"blasted dead, or lying bleeding in the scrub, with perhaps his face gone and a leg and an arm broken, unable to move but still alive, unable to drive away the flies or screen the ever-dropping rain, in a place where none will find him, or be able to help him; in a place where he will die and rot and shrivel, till nothing is left of him but a few rags and a few remnants and a little identification disc flapping on his bones in the wind."

Soldiers have to learn to see a light side to this universal chaos of calamities. But civilians ought

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not to be permitted to do so. There is a scene in a revue now running in a London music-hall in which huge bombs fall comically in German trenches. It is a legitimate amusement for soldiers, but hardly—one feels—for those who stay at home. Those who stay at home are constantly in danger of beginning to take things for granted; and it is too easy to allow oneself to take other people's sufferings for granted. Catholics feel this to such a degree that they make statues and pictures of Christ, which reveal the wounds of the crucifixion, and show the bleeding heart in his breast. These statues offend the non-Catholic as morbid and repulsive things, but one sees clearly enough the object of religious men and women in dwelling upon such horrors. It is simply to compel themselves to realize the sufferings which were endured, according to their belief, as a necessary means to their salvation. And we, too, must not allow ourselves to forget those nearer sufferings. If we forget them, then the war becomes but a Bacchic interlude in a complacent and drifting world. It will be only a meaningless dingdong of massacre instead of the introduction, as it may be made, to a new Europe. And our grandchildren will say that it had no more moral significance than old Kaspar could discover in the Battle of Blenheim. Popular historians, no doubt, will hurrah a great deal and heap up rhetorical mountains of words about the "deeds that saved the Empire," but the war will have failed to contribute anything to the service of mankind.

## T. M. KETTLE

Tom Kettle has been killed in Flanders—Tom Kettle, the most brilliant Irishman of his generation, the generation after Mr. Yeats and A. E. He was brilliant in conversation, brilliant in public speech, brilliant in the written phrase. To be in his company was to be in the company of the most melancholy man of his years in Ireland, and the wittiest. He was by nature of the school of the pessimists. He found a kind of intellectual mirror in Anatole France. But he could not achieve consolation, like Anatole France, through wit and Rabelaisianism. He was too tragical-hearted for that. One thought of him as a young philosopher in a sad cloak. I once saw a pen-and-ink drawing of James Clarence Mangan that had strange resemblances to Kettle. He seemed in the same way to go about visibly accompanied by doom. His conversation at times was like a comment on doom, scornful, cheerful, challenging, paradoxical—emotion turned back from the abyss with an epigram.

Those who know nothing of Ireland will regard it as a paradox that one of the first public acts of Kettle's life was to organize a body of students to capture the Royal University organ in Dublin, and so prevent "God Save the King" from being played at the conferring of degrees, while his last act has been to die for the liberties of Europe in the uniform of the British Army. But to Kettle himself there was no contradiction in this. "God Save the King" has been sung in Ireland for a century, not as a song of freedom, but as a hymn of hate against liberty.

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Kettle saw in the German outrage on Belgium simply a new geographication of the curse of Cromwell. I remember the mood in which he came back from Belgium, where the outbreak of war had found him engaged in buying rifles for the National Volunteers. He was horrified by the spectacle of a bully let loose on a little nation. He was horrified, too, by the philosophic lie at the back of all this greed of territory and power. He was horrified at seeing the Europe he loved going down into brawling and bloody ruin. Not least—and no one can understand contemporary Ireland who does not realize this—was he horrified by the thought that, if Germany won, Belgium would become what he had mourned in Ireland, a nation in chains.

That was the mood in which he offered his services to the War Office. He always dreamed of an Ireland whose life would be identified with the life of Europe. He believed that in fighting for the soul of Europe he was fighting for the soul of Ireland. He hated any nationalism which had not internationalism for its complement. In his most characteristic book, "The Day's Burden"—the very title of the book seems like a piece of autobiography—he expressed his longing for an Irish Goethe who would teach Ireland "that while a strong people has its own self for centre, it has the universe for circumference." He believed in Nationalism because "in gaining her own soul, Ireland will gain the whole world." The last time I saw him—it was in Dublin last July—he was philosophizing after his manner on the "coloured rags" for which men lay the world waste. He was a Nationalist, not through love of a flag, but through love of freedom. He would have pulled down all barriers against human sympathies. He despised Jingoism and narrowness on all sides. One remembers his contemptuous summary of Mr. Kipling's Ulster poem as:

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"A bucketful of Boyne  
To put the sunrise out."

His attitude with regard to the Dublin insurrection in Easter Week was typical of the conflict of his sympathies, as of the sympathies of many Irish soldiers during the last few months. He was aghast at the insurrection: he fought in the streets of Dublin to suppress it. But he was equally aghast at the manner of its suppression and the execution of the leaders of the revolt. Events seemed to have overwhelmed him with despair. The murder of Sheehy-Skeffington, whose brother-in-law he was, had especially sunk into his soul as a monstrous and incredible cruelty. He had often differed from Skeffington, who always marched straight for one goal, while he himself, being less of a man of action by temperament, meditated upon goals rather than marched to them; but he loved him for the uncompromising and radically gentle idealist he was. He seemed, as he talked, like the spirit of pity incarnate —some shadow born out of the imagination of Turgenev or Thomas Hardy. He spoke at one moment with indignation and mockery of those whom he had fought as enemies, and the next with a curious envious reverence of men who had died with so unflinching a heroism. He was bitter that they had murdered his dream of an Ireland peopled, not only by good Irishmen, but by good Europeans; but of one of the insurgent leaders, whom we both knew and loved, he said: "I would gladly have given my life for him."

Some day, perhaps, a great artist will arise who will be able to portray the passions and sufferings of Ireland in the year 1916. If he does he will find in Kettle a representative figure—an exaggeratedly representative figure—of much of the suffering of the time. And how attractive and wayward

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and crusading a figure, too ! Wit, metaphysician, economist, politician, professor, Bohemian, he was, indeed, as he called Anatole France, a soldier of "the lost cause of intellect." It was to the standard of the intellect in a gloomy world that he always gaily rallied. His darting phrases made straight for the heart of unintelligence—sometimes, also, no doubt, for the heart of intelligence. The truth is, he never could resist a good phrase. When he sat in Parliament, he summed up the frailty of Mr. Balfour in yielding to the Tariff Reformers in the sentence : "They have nailed their leader to the mast." And his conversation was a procession of such things uttered from a large melancholy mouth with no more than the flutter of a smile. And now he is dead, a soldier in the lost cause of the intellect in national and international affairs. Perhaps, as a result of his death, his ideas will begin to live—the root ideas, I mean, apart from their accidental application—his ideas, especially, of a new Ireland in a new Europe, of peace and humanity and honour.

But meanwhile consider the tragedy of it all. Sheehy-Skeffington is shot by British soldiers at the command of a mad officer in April : Tom Kettle dies at the hands of German soldiers five months later. There you have more than a personal tragedy. You have a last symbolical act in the age-long tragedy of Ireland.

## SHEEHY-SKEFFINGTON

Sheehy-Skeffington's death at the hands of soldiers in the Dublin rising stirs the imagination all the more profoundly because not merely was he innocent of any crime, but he seemed to be almost the only person left in Ireland who was an irreconcilable believer in peace. Ireland has in the last year or two been occupied by five bodies of armed men—the British Army, the National Volunteers, the Irish Volunteers, the Ulster Volunteers, and the Irish Citizen Army. Skeffington stood aloof from them all. He believed furiously in the ideals of some of them, and disbelieved furiously in the ideals of others. But he objected equally to the methods of all. Some months before his death he moved at a meeting of extreme Nationalists a resolution calling for an immediate end to the European war. But the meeting threw out his resolution and passed another instead, to the effect that the war must go on till the liberty of Ireland was assured. Skeffington was constantly in a minority of one even in the house of his friends.

I first heard of Sheehy-Skeffington, I think, when he was running a weekly called *The National Democrat*. If I remember right, it was edited by him and Fred Ryan (who afterwards went to Cairo to work on an Egyptian Nationalist paper, and was editing *Egypt* in London when he died in 1913). Skeffington and Ryan were exceptional figures in the ranks of Irish Nationalism. They were Socialists, Suffragists, anti-clericals, and many other things that the average Nationalist is not. They had something of the Frenchman's eager scepticism and desire to see

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things in the light of reason. Fred Ryan's heroes lay among the French philosophers of the eighteenth century. Skeffington's inspiring hero was nearer home. It was Michael Davitt. I do not mean that he was a blind follower of Davitt's. Davitt had been a Fenian, and Skeffington was not that. But Davitt may be said to have been the first democrat in Parnellite Ireland. He believed in the cause of the working classes, the nationalization of the land, and in lay control of the schools. Skeffington's politics lay beyond this, but this was their foundation. His enthusiasm resulted in his writing a polemical life of Davitt, in which he accepted and emphasized Davitt's hostile characterization of Parnell.

Skeffington did not in those days belong to the extreme section of the Nationalists. He was a member of the United Irish League—a most unwelcome member at times, when he filled the part of the Socratic gadfly. Orthodox members of all leagues have a way of passing resolutions and then going asleep for the rest of the year. Skeffington's resolutions all had the object of waking people up. He did not believe in tact or compromise. He believed in fighting for principles. And he was always doing it. Politicians, whose business is with programmes rather than with principles, were impatient of so unrestrained an interloper. As a result, Skeffington was constantly at odds with the majority. He became a sort of legend as an interrupter of the somnolent. One thought of his red beard as a storm-signal, and of his long knicker-bockers as an assertion of principle at all times and in all places. Every orthodoxy in Dublin regarded him as an eccentric. He was the leader of an even smaller party than Mr. Tim Healy. No jeers or sneers, however, could silence him. He seemed to thrive on them. He was as irrepressible as the pre-war Gustave Hervé or the later Liebknecht. He

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was Daniel in the lion's den, enjoying the humours of his position. Ultimately, even his enemies had to admit that, eccentric though he might seem, he was of courage unexcelled. He never refused a fight.

What astonished many people was the splendid ease with which he laid aside the bitterness of controversy in his private relations. Reading his articles one would sometimes think of him as a controversialist, violent, rasping, unsympathetic. When one met him, however, one discovered him to be above all things cheerful, tolerant and sociable. He would joke about his misadventures and the derisive abuse which was occasionally heaped upon him. He could converse without malice with his worst enemy. He enjoyed scoring points in his rather high voice and his Ulsterish accent; but he was incessantly amiable as he did so. His voice might be sharp, but his quick eyes were gay and unexpectedly gentle. He enjoyed argument, one felt, like a game of reason. He enjoyed hearing the other side as well as fighting for his own. His ability to appreciate other people's points-of-view was shown in a series of dialogues which he wrote about ten years ago and published week by week in Mr. W. P. Ryan's paper, *The Irish Peasant*. He called his series "Dialogues of the Day," and discussed in them topics of the hour from the points-of-view of United Irish Leaguers, Sinn Féiners, Ulstermen, priests, business men and other types of Irishmen. They were both amusing and impartial. Skeffington, indeed, was a very clever as well as a very honest journalist.

Of late years he was associated chiefly with the labour movement, the suffrage movement and the anti-war movement. He worked hard for justice to the poor during the great Larkin strikes which preceded the war. He fought equally hard in the militant Suffragist movement, pacifist though he was,

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but it was obviously the self-sacrifice rather than the violence of the movement which attracted him.

One might have expected that so militant a personality would throw himself with enthusiasm into the National Volunteer movement, which grew up in Ireland as a counterblast to Sir Edward Carson. And there is no doubt that Skeffington was strongly attracted to the Volunteers. He loved them for their honesty, their self-sacrifice, their idealism. But his belief that the problems of the world should be settled, not by bloodshed, but by reason, prevented him from going all the way with them, and in *The Irish Citizen* he published a protest against the theory of raising an Irish Nationalist army, in the form of an "open letter" to his friend Thomas MacDonagh, afterwards executed for his share in the rising. In the course of this open letter, Skeffington wrote:—

"You will say Ireland is too small, too poor, ever to be a militarist nation in the European sense. True, Ireland's militarism can never be on so grand a scale as that of Germany or England; but it may be equally fatal to the best interests of Ireland. European militarism has drenched Europe in blood; Irish militarism may only crimson the fields of Ireland. For us that would be disaster enough."

He then went on to suggest, as an alternative to the preparation of an armed body of Nationalists,

an organization of people prepared to dare all things for their object, prepared to suffer and to die rather than abandon one jot of their principles, but an organization that will not lay it down as its fundamental principle. 'We will prepare to kill our fellow men.'"

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And now the poet of the sword and the journalist of peace, both of them men of genial light-heartedness, lie in an equal grave with bullet-wounds in their breasts.

Skeffington's pacifism was double-edged. It was the pacifism of the Nationalist and the pacifism of the Internationalist. If he had been a German or an Englishman he would, no doubt, have been a conscientious objector. Being an Irishman, who took the view that this is not Ireland's war, he was also an anti-recruiting propagandist. He believed that Ireland as a nation has the same right to remain neutral in this war as Denmark has; and he argued his case on comparable grounds to those on which M. Henri Bourassa, the Canadian Nationalist, claimed that Canada ought to remain neutral. In the first half of 1915 he got into trouble on account of his anti-recruiting speeches, and was sent to prison. He refused to take food, however, and as soon as he was exhausted by a hunger-strike the authorities let him go. Unfortunately the hunger-strike affected his heart, and he was ill for some time after his release. He afterwards went to America, where he explained that he and those who agreed with him were not pro-German but merely desired that Ireland should remain neutral in the war. The pro-Germans in America were indignant at his suggestion that pro-Germanism was a rarity in Ireland.

Skeffington, however, was intellectually a pacifist as well as a neutralist. His interests were social-democratic and internationalist. He would certainly have stood by the side of Liebknecht if he had been a German. He hated Imperialist wars as denials of the brotherhood of man.

In writing of Sheehy-Skeffington I am naturally concerned with expounding *his* ideas (in so far as I understand them) and not my own. I differed from him on the subject of the present war as on many

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other subjects. But however much one differed from him, one could still watch his fighting and heretical progress with immense admiration for his devotion and courage. He was a "bonnie fighter." He was besides, I think, the honestest man in Ireland. How generous was the spirit in which, in those days of insurrection, the police having been withdrawn from the streets of Dublin, he set out for the danger-zone to remind the poor and the starved of their duties of citizenship! That lonely mission to put down looting in the streets was a worthy last act in a life devoted to noble causes. "You will find out your mistake afterwards," he said to the soldiers who were about to shoot him; and having said so he died smiling. Ireland, and the world, could ill afford to lose so good a citizen—so daring, so energetic, so challenging, so individual. Probably he would never have been the leader of a large party in Irish politics however long he had lived. But as a guerilla critic in advance of his age, he would have been of infinite service in a self-governing Ireland. He was less a dreamer than a propagandist. But every humanitarian cause in Ireland, while gaining an example, has lost a heroic champion through his death.

## ON NATIONALISM AND NATIONALITY

The idea of Nationalism is generally misunderstood. The Imperialists do not try to understand it; they call it sedition and hand it over to the police. Unfortunately, a great number of good democrats—Socialists and humanitarians especially—are also hostile to the national idea. They regard it as an aggressive denial of the brotherhood of man, a shrill and immoral exaggeration of individualism. Perhaps this is because Nationalism means so many different things in different countries. In Russia, for instance, Nationalism has come (or had, in the Tsar's time) to mean Chauvinism—the very reverse of the real meaning of the word. Nationalists of the Russian sort are essentially Imperialists or Supernationalists—perverters of the decent things in patriotism. You may always take it that a Nationalist who shows signs of Chauvinism is an Imperialist in the making. By his Chauvinism he has already betrayed the central principle of Nationalism, which is to respect the personality of every other nation as one wishes the personality of one's own nation to be respected. Therefore, when one speaks of Nationalism as a political theory and not as a catchword of party politics, one is thinking of Nationalism like Mazzini's—the Nationalism which urges countries like Finland, Persia, India, Poland, Egypt, Georgia, and Ireland to strive, not for mastery over other nations, but for an equal place in an international brotherhood of peoples.

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Nationalism, then, is a theory concerning the personality of nations. Nationality, said Mazzini, is the individuality of peoples, and Nationalism is simply an assertion of the belief that the individuality of a people is as holy and real and desirable a thing as the individuality of a man or a woman. It holds up the ideal of a many-coloured cosmopolitanism of free nations as opposed to a colourless and mechanical cosmopolitanism of big Powers and subject races. The most cosmopolitan of creeds, it is eternally opposed to the pseudo-cosmopolitanism which means denationalisation—the sort of cosmopolitanism which is referred to in a famous passage in “Rudin,” where Turgenev, speaking through one of his characters, says: “Cosmopolitanism is all twaddle, the cosmopolitan is a nonentity—worse than a nonentity: without nationality is no art, nor truth, nor life, nor anything. You cannot even have an ideal face without individual expression: only a vulgar face can be devoid of it.” In the eyes of Nationalists, Imperialism makes for the vulgarization, the spiritual lifelessness, of the world. Nationalism, on the other hand, aims at opening up a way by which the nations may have life, and have it more abundantly.

It might be possible to admit a good deal of this without understanding in all cases how the Nationalist theory is to be put into practice. Some people seem to find it difficult to tell a nation when they see one. They do not know whether Georgia is a nation or only part of Russia, whether Ireland is a nation or only a province of what the lawyers call the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. If Ireland is a nation, they say, for example, then why not Yorkshire? Is the individuality of Ireland any more marked than the individuality of Yorkshire? These are fair questions. The answer to them is that Yorkshire will be a nation on the same day on

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which she feels that she is one, and on which her consciousness becomes so separate from the national consciousness of England that she will desire to express it in a distinct literature, language, social and political life, and all the rest of it. Ireland simply has a different national consciousness from England. Her very dissensions which she herself finds so interesting only bore England. Even the dullest person can see that she has a distinct personality of her own to the making of which thousands of years have contributed—years of social and political change, of geographic separateness, of sun and wind and rain falling upon green growing things—thousands of years of the spirit of place working among men and women and creating an inheritance of personality and sentiment for the children of even the latest comers to the land.

Take the case of India again. Imperialists tell us of India, as Metternich used to say of Italy, that it is a mere “geographical expression.” Thousands of authentic Indian voices, on the other hand, rise in every corner of the country to call India their motherland—in other words, to prove in the most effectual way possible that India is a unit of national consciousness. Indian Nationalism is an obvious fact to everybody except the people who think they can explain away all the great events since the Flood by saying that they are the work of paid agitators; and the reality of Indian Nationalism is sufficient proof of the reality of the Indian nation. It is, of course, part of an unscrupulous Imperialist policy to deny the Indian nation—to say to the Indians, “ You are divided into Hindu and Mahometan, into Mahratta and Punjaubee, into all sorts of races and religions. It is your want of unity which compels England to go in and manage your affairs for you. You would only quarrel and kill each other if you were left to yourselves.”

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One would set more store by the conclusion of the Imperialist if one did not know that with him the wish is here father to the thought. "Divide that you may govern," is an old settled principle of Imperial policy, and subject peoples are kept subject only by a constant excitement of all their worst passions in a way that recalls the degradation, without the heroism, of civil war. "But the worst of this is," said Archbishop Boulter, Primate of Ireland, when oppression was drawing Irishmen together in the eighteenth century, "that it tends to unite Protestant with Papist, and whenever that happens good-bye to the English interest in Ireland for ever." In other words, in order to further an Imperial policy, Ireland was to be kept, like India, "a geographical expression," a scene of civil hatreds, and to be prevented by hook or by crook from becoming a nation, in which men of opposite creeds would agree to differ and would collaborate on common days in striving for the welfare of their country. Imperialism is surely the meanest and most dis honourable creed that ever deluded thousands of decent men and women.

One may meet the Imperialist half-way, however, and admit to some extent the "geographical expression" argument. Grant, for instance, that Italy was once a "geographical expression." The question that immediately arises is: "Does the Imperialist hold it would have been better for Italy to have remained so and never to have awokened into nationhood?" If he thinks that it is better to be a geographical expression than a free nation, why does he (supposing, for instance, he is an Englishman) recoil from the thought of the subjection of England to some foreign Power? And, if it is better to be a nation than a geographical expression, then surely he is bound to aid Poland, India, Persia, Egypt, Ireland, and all other trammelled peoples,

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as far as in him lies, in their struggle for a place among the free nations. Every nation begins by being a geographical expression. Nationalism is always a movement, first, to give the geographical expression a soul, and, next, to give the soul a chance of expressing the best and most vital that is in it. The only condition upon which we can have what Mazzini finely called the "Holy Alliance of the Peoples" is that all the peoples shall be free and equal, each living according to its own conscience and its own idea of civilization.

In order to live according to its own conscience, a nation has often to rid itself of foreign domination in its government, or in its finance, or in its industries, or in its intellectual life; for a foreign tyranny is usually more deadening to the soul of a people than even the worst home tyranny. Thus, Nationalism is in one respect a protest against the domination of foreigners: which seems to many people to be a narrow business. Nationalism, on the other hand, is equally a protest against the subjection of foreigners: it is as wide and humane as the hatred of slavery. It stands for universal rights, and makes for understanding, not misunderstanding, between nation and nation, for the nations can only speak to each other with understanding when each is free and respects the freedom of its neighbour. Thus, Nationalism is the necessary complement of Internationalism. Either without the other becomes perverted and inhuman, and is a denial of great spiritual principles. The true Nationalist is he who aims at universal peace and brotherhood through universal liberty. He therefore believes that the dominant peoples stand to gain no less than the subject peoples from the spread of the national idea. He holds that if, for instance, the English nation were substituted for the British Empire, there would be fewer possibilities of wars, and that the English

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people would make for themselves a fuller, freer, happier and more imaginative civilization. That, however, is a point upon which I have no time just now to dwell. Mr. Chesterton is one of the few writers who have emphasized this very necessary side of the Nationalist theory. Perhaps he will one day give us a book on the necessity of Nationalism as a political principle, no less for the nations that are at present swollen into empires than for the nations that have dwindled into geographical expressions.

## THE SPIRIT OF MAN

One effect of the Russian Revolution has been to revive the faith of vast multitudes of people in the spirit of man. Mr. Robert Bridges some time ago compiled an anthology in honour of the spirit of man and its soarings. But the Russian Revolution has touched the imagination of thousands on whom Mr. Bridges' selections from the world's literature have no effect beyond that of airy eloquence. In the Russian Revolution they see the achievement of the almost impossible. They had grown as sceptical in regard to the success of revolutions—especially in Russia—as the Pope's Legate in *A Soul's Tragedy* with his mocking comment: “I have known *four-and-twenty* leaders of revolts.” And it was not only in regard to revolutions that many people had recently been growing sceptical. The first idealism in which the war had been begun had lost most of its brightness like a three-year-old penny, and a prosaic and doubting dullness had taken its place in the minds of thousands who in 1914 were the most magnificent spendthrifts of words like “freedom,” “humanity,” and “national honour.” Men who at that time desired to rebuild the world had relapsed into the dingdong of commonplace existence, and would have been well enough content to defeat the Germans and leave the rebuilding of the world to those who (in, say, a thousand years’ time) may have more leisure on their hands. It was a natural reaction. The secret of perpetual idealism has not been discovered any more than the secret of perpetual motion. It is never likely to be discovered while newspapers outshriek each other in

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a manner that debases an atmosphere richer than Homer in disinterested heroism to the level of a squabble of drunken costers. The perversion of the issues of the war by the sensational Press has made ideals seem nothing but platitudes spoken with the tongue in the cheek and an air as of "I don't think!"

But it is not only the Press that is to blame for so great a part of the public's having fallen back into the habit of jog-trot and commonplace aims. The limitations of human nature itself are the chief culprits. Human nature in the Allied countries began the war prepared for a brief and glorious flight. It found itself expected to remain at exalted levels over Christmas, then over a second Christmas, then over a third Christmas. It realized that it was impossible to stay so far above the ground for so long. It sank with exhausted wings, and the war ultimately became a custom rather than an inspiration. Apart from this, a feeling of human helplessness was common. Pessimism had in many people restored to life the theory that human beings were being used by a blind fate in a futile quarrel that would leave everything almost exactly where it had been before except for some millions of mourners. "The more it changes, the more it is the same," they quoted, and sat down to rest in sad arm-chairs above the battle. They recalled the fact that Pitt had made war on the French Revolution with as fine phrases as those with which Mr. Asquith made war on Prussia. They forgot that, while Pitt had made war on armed opinions that were for the most part right, the England of Mr. Asquith's time had made war on armed opinions that were devilishly wrong. They saw in the present as in the Napoleonic War only the drifting of helpless millions of atoms into collision. They recalled Mr. Hardy's picture in *The Dynasts* of monstrous armies advancing to the attack like legions of cheesemites. They

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told themselves that another Mr. Hardy a hundred years hence would see the present conflict in the same terms of infinite littleness. The spirit of man seemed to them a decided failure, incapable of self-direction, a doomed and homeless wanderer, hurried nowhere in particular like dust in the wind.

Most of us, to tell the truth, look at human nature through the different ends of the telescope by turns. Now we marvel at its infinite smallness; the next day we are amazed by its immensity, as of a god come down to earth. There is no doubt that the reading of history makes the philosophical exceedingly sensible of the littleness of man. What reputable cause of war, they ask, had Athens and Sparta, or Carthage and Rome, or England and France? They reduce the very Crusades to adventures in pursuit of gain, and from Julius Cæsar to Louis Quatorze they see the lust of power wasting the lives of simple people for greedy ends. This, however, is too easy an interpretation of history. After all, even if the lust for power marches through history as the principal character, the challenge to the lust for power also rings out triumphantly with splendid iteration. No doubt, as one manifestation of the lust for power is defeated, another rises in its place. The defender of liberty in one generation may be the attacker of liberty in the next. At the same time in spite of the ebb and flow in human affairs, it is difficult to believe, after reading history, that the sway of human progress is perfectly symbolized by the sway of the sea. One simply cannot admit that no real progress has been made from the beastliness of primitive man. The true image of the spirit of man is not the coming and going of the tide, but a builder. Its great aim is to build something permanent—a civilization, a church, a poem. Its history is to some extent a history of failures. But amid a wilderness of failures suddenly we come

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in full view of one of its master achievements. Out of a tangle of meaningless centuries of war emerges the Roman sense of order. Amid the base ambitions of a long line of kings, the French ideal of manners slowly comes into being, a gift to the world. The English passion for personal liberty—a passion much counterfeited in the nineteenth century and much derided in this—is mainly the gift of men who, if looked at through the belittling end of the telescope, appear egotists and brawlers. There is a good deal to be said for disparaging most of the people one meets in history, as there is apparently—for nearly every everybody does it—a good deal to be said for disparaging the people one meets in ordinary life. But this is quite consistent with a never-ending amazement at the noble inheritance bequeathed to us by the creative human spirit. One may find good reasons for disbelieving in every individual leader in the French Revolution—there are certainly few whom one regards with affection—but it is a sort of political infidelity to disbelieve in the resurrection of human nature which the spirit behind the French Revolution brought about.

One has no more right to be disappointed in history than in humanity. The very young have some right to be disappointed in both. But none of the rest of us has the right, unless we cling to happy illusions about the immediate perfectibility of human nature. There is a time in the life of an imaginative young man when he accepts "The world's great age begins anew" as the only creed fit for a spring morning. He believes he is just on the eve of the great social revolution which is to settle everything. Human nature, he tells himself, has only to have the case for Utopia laid before it with passion and understanding in order to insist on beginning on the foundations of it with the next sunrise. It is a view which is impossible, in a sense,

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to men of experience, but none the less there is a fundamental truth in it which men of experience usually ignore. Here at least we have a recognition of the almost immeasurable scope of the human spirit. Here is the assertion of the adventurers that there is no North Pole too difficult to be discovered—no problem so desperate that it must be abandoned as insoluble. The uttermost faith in human nature has far more kinship with truth than the uttermost distrust in human nature. Yet the old men still go on shaking their heads and regarding a headshake as the last gesture of wisdom. Experience with many people means little more than a hardening of the arteries. These people find it difficult to believe that a better world will ever exist than the England of the day before yesterday, that a better poet will ever exist than Shakespeare, that a better sculptor will ever exist than Pheidias. They regard the spirit of man—which built the Pyramids and the Parthenon and the Cathedral of Amiens, which created the Greek city-state and the Roman civilization and the French Revolution—as having sunk into a middle-age content with moderate aims like themselves. The fires of the world, they think, are burnt out, and humanity will cease to hurl itself wastefully against the brazen walls of the impossible. At least, so they thought till the war broke out and disturbed them with a sense of mightier, madder efforts than any Shelleyan dreamer had ever summoned them to make. And now comes the Russian Revolution with its astonishing renunciations and ideals to remind them that the Shelleys govern the world no less than the kings and the countingshouses. Faith in human nature awakes again, and even those who look back with disappointment on the French Revolution are looking forward with hope to the Revolution in Russia. They feel like beginning the calendar anew and making this the first year of the

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world. It was once said by an aged politician that no change does half so much good as those who advocate it hope, or half so much harm as those who oppose it fear. It is the lesson of experience, but, thus stated, it implies a certain despair which would weaken man's efforts and enfeeble his dreams. There is no need to anticipate disillusion. Events such as the Russian Revolution are quite as likely to give the lie to our faithlessness as to our faith. Without them we are apt to forget that the spirit of man can accomplish wonders in the present surpassing even the wonders of the past. There are still many people in Western Europe who regard so modest a proposal as the abolition of poverty as mere rainbow-chasing. One great service the Russian Revolution is doing us is that it is diminishing the incredulity of the average man in regard to the better future of the world. Men are bringing out their Utopias from their cupboards again, and are dusting them with a look of satisfaction.

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